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Volume IX

THE COLONEL TURNED UPON HIM WITH A SNARL.

THE NOVELS, STORIES AND SKETCHES OF F. HOPKINSON SMITH

THE FORTUNES OF OLIVER HORN

II

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS · NEW YORK · 1902

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FROM DRAWINGS BY WALTER APPLETON CLARK

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THE FORTUNES OF OLIVER HORN

VOL. II

THE FORTUNES OF OLIVER HORN

XIII

BELOW MOOSE HILLOCK

IT was not long before the bare rooms of the Academy School, owing to the political situation, which necessitated the exercise of economies in every direction, began to suffer.

One night the students found the gas turned out and a small card tacked on the door of the outer hall. It read, —

> SCHOOL CLOSED FOR WANT OF FUNDS. WILL PERHAPS BE OPENED IN THE AUTUMN.

Signs of like character were not unusual in the history of the school. The wonder was, considering the vicissitudes through which the Academy had passed, that it was opened at all.

From the institution's earlier beginnings in the old house on Bond Street, to its flight from the loft close to Grace Church, and then to the abandoned building opposite the old hotel near Washington Square, where Amos Cobb always stayed when he came to New York, and so on down to its own home on Broadway, its history had been one long struggle for recognition and support.

This announcement, bitter enough as it was to Oliver, was followed by another even more startling, when he reached the office next day, and Mr. Slade called him into his private room.

"Mr. Horn," said his employer, motioning Oliver to a seat, and drawing his chair close beside him so that he could lay his hand upon the young man's knee, "I am very sorry to tell you that after the first of June we shall be obliged to lay you off. It is not because we are dissatisfied with your services, for you have been a faithful clerk, and we all like you and wish you could stay, but the fact is if this repudiation goes on we will all be ruined. I am not going to discharge you; I 'm only going to give you a holiday for a few months. Then, if the war scare blows over, we want you back again. I appreciate that this has come as suddenly upon you as it has upon us, and I hope

you will not feel offended when, in addition to your salary, I hand you the firm's check for an extra amount. You must not look upon it as a gift, for you have earned every cent of it."

These two calamities were duly reported in a ten-page letter to his mother by our young hero, sitting alone, as he wrote, up in his sky parlor, crooning over his dismal coke fire. Was he, then, to begin over again the weary tramping of the streets, he said to himself. And the future! What did that hold in store for him? Would the time ever come when he could follow the bent of his tastes? He was getting on so well — even Miss Grant had said so — and it had not interfered with his work at the store, either. The check in his pocket proved that.

His mother's answer made his heart bound with joy.

"Take Mr. Slade at his word. He is your friend and means what he says. Find a place for the summer where you can live cheaply, and where the little money which you now have will pay your way. In the fall you can return to your work. Don't think of coming home, much as I should like to put my arms around you. I cannot spare the money to bring you here now, as I have just paid the interest on the mortgage. Moreover, the whole of Kennedy Square is

upset and our house seems to be the centre of disturbance. Your father's views on slavery are well known, and he is already being looked upon with disfavor by some of our neighbors. At the club the other night he and Judge Bowman had some words, which were very distressing to me. Mr. Cobb was present, and was the only one who took your father's part. Your father, as you may imagine, is very anxious over the political situation, but I cannot think our people are going to fight and kill each other, as Colonel Clayton predicts they will before another year has passed."

Oliver's heart bounded like a loosened balloon as he laid down his mother's letter and began pacing the room. Neither the political outlook, nor club discussions, nor even his mother's hopes and fears, concerned him. It was the sudden loosening of all his bonds that thrilled him. Four months to do as he pleased in ; the dreadful mortgage out of the way for six months ; his mother willing, and he with money enough in his pocket to pay his way without calling upon her for a penny ! Was there ever such luck ! All care rolled from his shoulders ; even the desire to see his mother and Sue and those whom he loved at home was forgotten in the rosy prospect before him.

The next day he told Mr. Slade of his plans, and read him part of his mother's letter.

"Very sensible woman, your mother," his employer answered, with his bluff heartiness. "Just the thing for you to do, and I 've got the very spot. Go to Ezra Pollard's. He lives up in the mountains at a little place called East Branch, on the edge of a wilderness. I fish there every spring, and I 'll give you a letter to him."

Long before his day of departure came he had dusted out his old hair trunk,—there were other and more modern trunks to be had, but Oliver loved this one because it had been his father's,—gathered his painting materials together, his easel, brushes, leather case, and old slouch hat that he wore to fish in at home, and spent his time counting the days and hours when he could leave the world behind him and, as he wrote Fred, "begin to live."

He was not alone in this planning for a summer exodus. The other students had indeed all cut their tether-strings and disappeared long before his own freedom came. Jack Bedford had gone to the coast to live with a fisherman and paint the surf, and Fred was with his people, away up near the lakes. As for the lithographers, sign painters, and beginners, they were spending their evenings somewhere else than in

the old room under the shaded gas-jets. Even Margaret, so Mother Mulligan told him, was up "wid her folks, somewheres."

"And she was that broken-hearted," she added, "whin they shut up the school — bad cess to 'em! Oh, ye would 'a' nigh kilt yerself wid grief to 'a' seen her, poor darlint."

"Where is her home?" asked Oliver, ignoring the tribute to his sympathetic tendencies. He had no reason for asking, except that she had been the only woman among them, and he accordingly felt that a certain courtesy was due her even in her absence.

"I 've bothered me head loose tryin' to remimber, but for the soul o' me, I can't. It 's cold enough up there, I know, to freeze ye solid, for Miss Margaret had wan o' her ears nipped last time she was home."

And so one fine morning in June, with Oliver bursting with happiness, the hair trunk and the leather case and sketching umbrella were thrown out at a New England way station in the gray dawn from a train in which Oliver had spent the night curled up on one of the seats.

Just as he had expected, the old coach that was to carry him was waiting beside the platform. There was a rush for top seats, and

Oliver got the one beside the driver, and the trunk and traps were stored in the boot under the driver's seat — it was a very small trunk, and took up but little room — and Marvin cracked his whip and away everybody went, the dogs barking behind and the women waving their aprons from the porches of the low houses facing the road.

And it was a happy young fellow who filled his lungs with the fresh air of the morning, and held on to the iron rail of the top seat as they bumped over the "Thank ye, marms," and who asked the driver innumerable questions, which it was part of the noted whip's duty and always his pleasure to answer. The squirrels darted across the road as if to get a look at the enthusiast and then ran for their lives to escape the wheels; and the crows heard the rumble, and rose in a body from the sparse cornfields for a closer view; and the big trees arched over his head, cooling the air and casting big shadows; and even the sun kept peeping over the edge of the hills from behind some jutting rock or clump of pines or hemlock, as if bent on lighting up his face, so that everybody could see how happy he was.

As the day wore on and the coach rattled over the big open bridge that spanned the rushing

mountain stream, Oliver's eye caught, far up the vista, the little dent in the line of blue that stood low against the sky. The driver said this was the Notch, and that the big hump to the right was Moose Hillock, and that Ezra's cabin nestled at its feet and was watered by the rushing stream, only it was a tiny little brook away up there that anybody could step over.

"'T ain't bigger 'n yer body where it starts out fresh up in them mountings," the driver said, touching his leaders behind their ears with the lash of his whip. "Runs clean round Ezra's, and 's jest as chuck full o' trout, be gosh, as a hive is o' bees."

And the swing and the freedom of it all! No office hours to keep; no boxes to nail up and roll out; nothing but sweetness and cool draughts of fresh mountain air, and big trees that he wanted to get down and hug; and jolly laughing brooks that ran out to meet him and called to him as he trotted along, or as the horses did, which was the same thing, he being part of the team.

And the day! Had there ever been such another? And the sky, too, filled with soft white clouds that sailed away over his head,—the little ones far in advance and already crowding up the Notch, which was getting nearer every hour.

And Marvin the driver — what a character he was, and how quaint his speech! And the cabins by the road, with their trim fences and winter's wood piled up so neatly under the sheds — all so different from any which he had seen at the South, and all so charming and exhilarating!

Never had he been so happy!

And why not? Twenty-three and in perfect health, without a care, and for the first time in all his life doing what he wanted most to do, with opportunities opening every hour for doing what he believed he could do best.

Oh, for some planet where such young saplings can grow without hindrance from the ignorant and the unsympathetic; where they can reach out for the sun on all sides and stretch their long arms skyward; where each vine can grow as it would in all the luxuriance of its nature, free from the pruning-knife of criticism and the strait-laced trellis of conventionality, — a planet on which the Puritan with his creeds, customs, fads, issues, and dogmas, and the Cavalier with his traditions and time-honored notions never sat foot! Where every round peg fits a round hole, and men toil with a will and with unclouded brows because their hearts find work for their hands and each day's task is a joy.

If the road and the country on each side of it, and the giant trees, now that they neared the mountains, and the deep ravines and busy, hurrying brooks had each inspired some exclamation of joy from Oliver, the first view of Ezra's cabin filled him so full of uncontrollable delight that he could hardly keep his seat long enough for Marvin to rein in his horses and get down and swing back the gate that opened into the pasture surrounding the house.

"Got a boarder for ye, Ezra," Marvin called to Oliver's prospective host, who had come down to meet the stage and get his empty butter-pails. Then, in a lower tone, "Sezs he 's a painter chap, and that Mr. Slade sent him up. He 's goin' to bunk in with ye all summer, he sezs. Seems like a knowin', happy kind er young feller."

They were pulling the pails from the rear boot, each one tied up in a wheat-sack, with a card marked "Ezra Pollard" sewed on the outside to distinguish it from the property of other East Branch settlers up and down the road.

Oliver had slipped from his seat and was tugging at his hair trunk. He did not know that the long, thin, slab-sided old fellow in a slouch hat, hickory shirt crossed by one suspender, and heavy cowhide boots was his prospective land-

lord. He supposed him to be the hired man, and that he would find Mr. Pollard waiting for him in the little sitting-room with the windows full of geraniums that looked so inviting and picturesque.

"Marve sez you 're lookin' fur me. Come along. Glad ter see ye."

"Are you Mr. Pollard?" His surprise not only marked the tones of his voice but the expression of his face.

"No, jes Ezry Pollard, that 's all. Hope Mr. Slade 's up and hearty?"

Mr. Slade was never so "up and hearty" as was Oliver that next morning.

Up with the sun he was, and hearty as a young buck out of a bed of mountain moss.

"Time to be movin', ain't it?" came Ezra Pollard's voice, shouting up the unpainted staircase. "Hank 's drawed a bucket out here at the well for ye to wash in. Need n't worry about no towel. Samanthy 's got one fur ye, but ye kin bring yer comb."

At the sound of Ezra's voice Oliver sprang from the coarse straw mattress, — it had been as eider-down to his stage-jolted body, — pushed open the wooden blind, and peered out. The sun was peeping over the edge of the Notch

and looking with wide eyes into the saucer-shaped valley in which the cabin stood. The fogs which at twilight had stolen down to the meadows and had made a night of it, now startled into life by the warm rays of the sun, were gathering up their skirts of shredded mist and tiptoeing back up the hillside, looking over their shoulders as they fled. The fresh smell of the new corn, watered by the night dew, and the scent of pine and balsam from the woods about him filled the morning air. Songs of birds were all about, — a robin on a fence post, and two larks high in air, singing as they flew.

Below him, bounding from rock to rock, ran the brook, laughing in the sunlight and tossing the spray high in the air in a mad frolic. Across this swirling line of silver lay a sparse meadow strewn with rock, plotted with squares of last year's crops, — potatoes, string beans, and cabbages, and now combed into straight green lines of early buckwheat and turnips. Beyond this a ragged pasture, fenced with blackened stumps, from which came the tinkle of cow bells, and farther on the grim, silent forest — miles and miles of forest seamed by a single road, leading to Moose Hillock and the great Stone Face.

Oliver slipped into his clothes ; ran down the stairs and out into the fresh morning air. As he

walked toward the well his eyes caught sight of Hank's bucket tilted on one edge of the well-curb, over which hung the big sweep, its lower end loaded with stone. On the platform stood a wooden bench sloppy with the drippings of the water-soaked pail. This bench held a tin basin and half a bar of rosin soap. Beside it was a single post sprouting hickory prongs, on which were hung as many cleanly scoured milk-pails glittering in the sun. On this post Hank had nailed a three-cornered piece of looking-glass — Hank had a sweetheart in the village below — a necessity and useful luxury, he told Oliver afterward, "in slickin' yerself up fer meals."

Once out in the sunshine Oliver, with the instinct of the painter suddenly roused, looked about him. He found that the cabin which had delighted him so in the glow of the afternoon, was even more enchanting in the light of the morning. To the plain, every-day, practical man it was but a long box with a door in the middle of each side, front and back, — one opening into a sitting-room, which again opened into a bedroom in which Ezra and his wife slept, with the windows choked with geraniums, their red cheeks pressed against the small panes, and the other opening into a kitchen, connecting

with a pantry and a long, rambling woodshed. To our young Raphael the simple cabin, from its homely, sagging door to its broken-backed roof, covered with rotting shingles, was nothing less than an enchanted palace.

He remembered the shingles. He had reached up in the night and touched them with his hands. He remembered, too, the fragrance they gave out,—a hot, dry, spicy smell. He remembered also the dried apples spread out on a board beside his bed, and the broken spinning wheel, and the wasp's nest. He was sure, too, there were many other fascinating relics stored away in this old attic. But for the sputtering tallow candle, which the night before was nearly burnt out, he would have examined everything else about him before he went to sleep.

Then his eye fell on the woodshed, and the huge pile of chips that Hank's axe had made in supplying Samanthy's stove, and the rickety, clay-plastered buggy and buckboard that had never known water since the day of their birth, and the two muskrat skins nailed to the outside planking — spoils of the mill-dam, a mile below.

Yes ; he could paint here !

With a thrill of delight surging through him he rolled up his sleeves, tilted the bucket, filled the basin with ice-cold water which Hank had

drawn for him, a courtesy only shown a stranger guest, and plunging in his hands and face, dashed the water over his head. Samanthy, meanwhile, in sunbonnet and straight-up-and-down calico dress, had come out with the towel, — half a salt sack, washed and rewashed to phenomenal softness (an ideal towel is a salt sack to those who know). Then came the rubbing until his flesh was aglow, and the parting of the wet hair with the help of Hank's glass; and with a toss of a stray lock back from his forehead Oliver went in to breakfast.

It fills me with envy when I think of that first toilet of Oliver's! I too have had just such morning dips, — one in Como, with the great cypresses standing black against the glow of an Italian dawn; another in the Lido at sunrise, my gondolier circling about me as I swam; still a third in Stamboul, with the long slants of light piercing the gloom of the stone dome above me — but oh, the smell of the pines and the great sweep of openness, with the mountains looking down and the sun laughing, and the sparkle and joyousness of it all! Ah, what a lucky dog was this Oliver!

And the days that followed! Each one a delight — each one happier than the one before. The sun seemed to soak into his blood; the

strength of the great hemlocks with their giant uplifted arms seemed to have found its way to his muscles. He grew stronger, more supple. He could follow Hank all day now, tramping the brook or scaling the sides of Bald Face, its cheeks scarred with thunderbolts. And with this joyous life there came a light into his eyes, a tone in his voice, a spring and buoyancy in his step that brought him back to the days when he ran across Kennedy Square and had no care for the day nor thought for the morrow. Before the week was out he had covered half a dozen canvases with pictures of the house as he saw it that first morning, bathed in the sunshine; of the brook; the sweep of the Notch, and two or three individual trees that he had fallen in love with, — a ragged birch in particular, a tramp of a birch with its toes out of its shoes and its bark coat in tatters.

Before the second week had arrived he had sought the main stage-road and had begun work on a big hemlock that stood sentinel over a turn in the highway. There was a schoolhouse in the distance and a log bridge under which the brook plunged. Here he settled himself for serious work.

He was so engrossed that he had not noticed the schoolchildren who had come up noiselessly

from behind and were looking in wonder at his drawings. Presently a child, who in her eagerness had touched his shoulder, broke the stillness in apology.

"Say, Mister, there 's a lady comes to school every day. She 's a painter, too, and drawed Sissy Mathers."

Oliver glanced at the speaker and the group about her; wished them all good-morning, and squeezed a fresh tube on his palette. He was too much absorbed in his work for prolonged talk. The child, emboldened by his cheery greeting, began again, the others crowding closer. "She drawed the bridge, too, and me and Jennie Waters was sitting on the rail — she 's awful nice."

Oliver looked up, smiling.

"What 's her name?"

"I don't know. Teacher calls her Miss Margaret, but there 's more to it. She comes every year."

Oliver bent over his easel, drew out a fine brush from the sheaf in his hand, caught up a bit of yellow ochre from his palette and touched up the shadow of the birch. "All the women painters must be Margarets," he said to himself. Then he fell to wondering what had become of her since the school closed. He had always felt

uncomfortable over the night when he had defended "the red-headed girl in blue gingham," as she was called by the students. She had placed him in the wrong by misunderstanding his reasons for serving her. The students had always looked upon him after that as a quarrelsome person, when he was only trying to protect a woman from insult. He could not find it in his heart to blame her, but he wished that it had not happened. As these thoughts filled his mind he became so absorbed that the children's good-by failed to reach his ear.

That day Hank had brought him his luncheon — two ears of hot corn in a tin bucket, four doughnuts, and an apple — the corn in the bottom of the bucket and the doughnuts and apple on top. He could have walked home for his midday meal, for he was within sound of Samanthy's dinner-horn, but he liked it better this way.

Leaving his easel standing in the road, he had waved his hand in good-by to Hank, picked up the bucket, and had crept under the shadow of the bridge to eat his luncheon. He had finished the corn, thrown the cobs to the fish, and was beginning on the doughnuts, when a step on the planking above him caused him to look up. A girl in a tam-o'-shanter cap was leaning over the rail. The sun was behind her, throwing her

face into shadow,—so blinding a light that Oliver only caught the nimbus of fluffy hair that framed the dark spot of her head. Then came a voice that sent a thrill of surprise through him.

"Why, Mr. Horn! Who would have thought of meeting you here?"

Oliver was on his feet in an instant, a half-eaten doughnut in one hand, his slouch hat in the other. With this he was shading his eyes against the glare of the sun. He was still ignorant of who had spoken to him.

"I beg your pardon, I—*why*, MISS GRANT!" The words burst from his lips as if they had been fired from a gun. "You here!"

"Yes, I live only twenty miles away, and I come here every year. Where are you staying?"

"At Pollard's."

"Why, that's the next clearing from mine. I'm at old Mrs. Taft's. Oh, please don't leave your luncheon."

Oliver had bounded up the bank to a place beside her.

"How good it is to find you here! I am so glad." He *was* glad; he meant every word of it. "Mrs. Mulligan said you lived up in the woods, but I had no idea it was in these mountains. Have you had your luncheon?"

"No, not yet," and Margaret held up a basket. "Look!" and she raised the lid. "Elderberry pie, two pieces of cake" —

"Good! and I have three doughnuts and an apple. I swallowed every grain of my hot corn like a greedy Jack Horner, or you should have half of it. Come down under the bridge, it 's so cool there," and he caught her hand to help her down the bank.

She followed him willingly. She had seen him greet Fred, and Jack Bedford, and even the gentle professor with just such outbursts of affection, and she knew there was nothing especially personal to her in it all. It was only his way of saying he was glad to see her.

Oliver laid the basket and tin can on a flat stone that the spring freshets had scoured clean; spread his brown corduroy jacket on the pebbly beach beside it, and with a laugh and the mock gesture of a courtier, conducted her to the head of his improvised table. Margaret laughed and returned the bow, stepping backward with the sweep of a great lady, and settled herself beside him. In a moment she was on her knees bending over the brook, her hands in the water, the tam-o'-shanter beside her. She must wash her hands, she said — "there was a whole lot of chrome yellow on her fingers" — and she held

them up with a laugh for Oliver's inspection. Oliver watched her while she dried and bathed her shapely hands, smoothed the hair from her temples, and tightened the coil at the back of her head which held all this flood of gold in check; then he threw himself down beside her, waiting until she should serve the feast.

As he told her of his trip up the valley and the effect it made upon him, and how he had never dreamed of anything so beautiful, and how good the Pollards were, and what he had painted and what he expected to paint, talking all the time with his thumb circling about as if it was a bit of charcoal and the air it swept through but a sheet of Whatman's best, her critical eye roamed over his figure and costume. She had caught in her first swift, comprehensive glance from over the bridge-rail, the loose jacket and broad-brimmed planter's hat, around which, with his love of color, Oliver had twisted a spray of nasturtium blossoms and leaves culled from the garden patch that morning; but now that he was closer, she saw the color in his cheeks and noticed, with a suppressed smile, the slight mustache curling at the ends, a new feature since the school had closed. She followed, too, the curves of the broad chest and the muscles outlined through his shirt. She had

never thought him so strong and graceful, nor so handsome. (The smile came to the surface now, an approving, admiring smile.) It was the mountain climbing, no doubt, she said to herself, and the open-air life that had wrought the change.

With a laugh and toss of her head she unpacked her own basket and laid her contribution to the feast on the flat rock, — the pie on a green dock-leaf, which she reached over and pulled from the water's edge, and the cake on the pink napkin, the only sign of city luxury in her outlay. Oliver's eye meanwhile wandered over her figure and costume, a costume he had never seen before on any living woman, certainly not any woman around Kennedy Square. The cloth skirt came to her ankles, which were covered with yarn stockings, and her feet were incased in shoes that gave him the shivers, the soles being as thick as his own and the leather as tough. (Sue Clayton would have died with laughter had she seen those shoes.) Her blouse was of gray flannel, belted to the waist by a cotton saddle-girth — white and red — and as broad as her hand. The tam-o'-shanter was coarse and rough, evidently home-made, and not at all like McFudd's, which was as soft as the back of a kitten and without a seam.

Then his eyes sought her face. He noticed how brown she was — and how ruddy and healthy ; how red the lips, — red as mountain berries, — and back of them big white teeth, white as peeled almonds. He caught the line of the shoulders and the round of the full arm and tapering wrist, and the small, well-shaped hand. "Queer clothes," he said to himself — "but the girl inside is all right."

Sitting under the shadow of the old bridge on the main highway, each weighed and balanced the other, even as they talked aloud of the Academy School, and the pupils, and the dear old professor whom they both loved. They discussed the prospect of its doors being opened the next winter. They talked of Mrs. Mulligan, and the old Italian who sold peanuts, and whose head Margaret had painted ; and of Jack Bedford and Fred Stone — the dearest fellow in the world — and last year's pictures, especially Church's "Niagara," the sensation of the year, and Whittredge's "Mountain Brook," and every other subject their two busy brains could rake and scrape up except — and this subject, strange to say, was the only one really engrossing their two minds — the overturning of Mr. Judson's body on the art school floor, and the upsetting of Miss Grant's mind for days thereafter. Once

Oliver had unintentionally neared the danger line by mentioning the lithographer's name, but Margaret had suddenly become interested in the movements of a chipmunk that had crept down for the crumbs of their luncheon, and with a woman's wit had raised her finger to her lips to command silence lest he should be frightened off.

They painted no more that afternoon. When the shadows began to fall in the valley, they started up the road, picking up Oliver's easel and trap, — both had stood unmolested and would have done so all summer with perfect safety, — and Oliver walked with Margaret as far as the bars that led into Taft's pasture. There they bade each other good-night, Margaret promising to be ready in the morning with her big easel and a fresh canvas, which Oliver was to carry, when they would both go sketching together and make a long blessed summer day of it.

That night Oliver's upraised, restless hands felt the shingles over his head more than once before he could get to sleep. He had not thought he could be any happier — but he was. Margaret's unexpected appearance had restored to him that something which the old life at home had always yielded. He was never really happy without the companionship of a woman, and this he had not had since leaving Kennedy Square.

Those he had met on rare occasions in New York were either too conventional or self-conscious, or they seemed to be offended at his familiar Southern ways. This one was so sensible and companionable, and so appreciative and sympathetic! He felt he could say anything to her and she would know what he meant. Perhaps, too, by and by she would understand just why he had upset a man who had been rude to her.

Margaret lay awake too—not long, not more than five minutes, perhaps. Long enough, however, to wish she was not so sunburnt, and that she had brought her other dress and a pair of gloves and a hat instead of this rough mountain suit. Long enough, too, to recall Oliver's standing beside her on the bridge with his big hat sweeping the ground, the color mounting to his cheeks, and that joyous look in his eyes.

"Was he really glad to see me," she said to herself, as she dropped off into dreamland, "or is it his way with all the women he meets? I wonder, too, if he protects them all?"

And so ended a day that always rang out in Oliver's memory with a note of its own.

These dreams under the shingles! What would life be without them?

XIV

UNDER A BARK SLANT

THE weeks that followed were rare ones for Margaret and Oliver.

They painted all day and every day.

The little schoolchildren posed for them, and so did the prim schoolmistress, a girl of eighteen in spectacles, with hair cut short in the neck. And old Jonathan Gordon, the fisherman, posed too, with a string of trout in one hand and a long pole cut from a sapling in the other. And once our two young comrades painted the milldam and the mill, Oliver doing the first and Margaret the last ; and Baker, the miller, caught them at it, and insisted in all sincerity that some of the money which the pictures brought must come to him, if the report were true that painters did get money for pictures. "It 's my mill, ain't it? And I ain't give no permission to take no part of it away, hev I ? "

They climbed the ravines, Margaret carrying the luncheon and Oliver the sketch-traps ; they built fires of birch bark, and roasted potatoes,

or made tea in the little earthen pot that Mrs. Taft loaned her. Or they waited for the stage in the early morning, and went half a dozen miles down the valley to paint some waterfall Oliver had seen the day he drove up with Marvin, or a particular glimpse of Moose Hillock from the covered bridge, or various shady nooks and sunlit vistas that remained fastened in Oliver's mind, and the memory of which made him unhappy until Margaret could enjoy them too.

The fact that he and a woman whom he had known but a little while were roaming the woods together, quite as a brother and sister might have done, never occurred to him. If it had it would have made no difference, nor could he have understood why any barrier should have been put up between them. He had been taking care of girls in that same way all his life. Every woman was a sister to him so far as his reverent protection over her went. The traditions of Kennedy Square had taught him this.

As the joyous weeks flew by, even the slight reserve which had marked their earlier intercourse began to wear off. It was "Oliver" and "Margaret" now, and even "Ollie" and "Madge" when they forgot themselves and each other in their work.

To Margaret this free and happy life together seemed natural enough. She had decided on the day of their first meeting that Oliver's interest in her was due wholly to his love of companionship, and not because of any special liking he might feel for her. Had she not seen him quite as cordial and as friendly to the men he knew? Satisfied on this point, Oliver began to take the place of a brother, or cousin, or some friend of her youth who loved another woman, perhaps, and was therefore safe against all contingencies, while she gave herself up to the enjoyment of that rare luxury, — the rarest that comes to a woman, — daily association with a man who could be big and strong and sympathetic, and yet ask nothing in return for what she gave him but her companionship and confidence.

In the joy of this new intercourse, and with his habit of trusting implicitly every one whom he loved, man, woman, or child, Oliver, long before the first month was over, had emptied his heart to Margaret as completely as he had ever done to Miss Clendenning. He had told her of Sue and of Miss Lavinia's boudoir, and of Mr. Crocker and his pictures; and of his poor father's struggles and his dear mother's determination to send him from home, — not

about the mortgage, that was his mother's secret, not his own, — and of the great receptions given by his Uncle Tilghman, and of all the other wonderful doings in Kennedy Square.

She had listened at first in astonishment, and then with impatience. Many of the things that seemed so important to him were valueless in her more practical eyes. Instead of a régime which ennobled those who enjoyed its privileges, she saw only a slavish devotion to worn-out traditions, and a clannish provincialism which proved to her all the more clearly the narrow-mindedness of the people who sustained and defended them. So far as she could judge, the qualities that she deemed necessary in the make-up of a robust life, instinct with purpose and accomplishment, seemed to be entirely lacking in Kennedy Square formulas. She saw, too, with a certain undefined pain, that Oliver's mind had been greatly warped by these influences. Mrs. Horn's domination over him, strange to say, greatly disturbed her; why, she could not tell. "She must be a proud, aristocratic woman," she had said to herself after one of Oliver's outbursts of enthusiasm over his mother, "wedded to patrician customs and with no consideration for any one outside of her class."

And yet none of these doubts and criticisms made the summer days less enjoyable.

One bright, beautiful morning when the sky was a turquoise, the air a breath of heaven, and the brooks could be heard laughing clear out on the main road, Oliver and Margaret, who had been separated for some days while she paid a visit to her family at home, started to find a camp that Hank had built the winter before as a refuge while he was hunting deer. They had reached a point in the forest where two paths met, when Margaret's quick ear caught the sound of a human voice, and she stopped to listen.

"Quick," she cried, "get behind these spruces, or he will see us and stop singing! It's old Mr. Burton. He is such a dear! He spends his summers here. I often meet him, and he always bows to me so politely, although he doesn't know me."

A man of sixty, bareheaded, dressed in a gray suit, with his collar and coat over his arm and hands filled with wild flowers, was passing leisurely along, singing at the top of his voice. Once he stopped, and, bending over, picked a bunch of mountain berries which he tucked into a buttonhole of his flannel shirt, just before disappearing in a turn of the path.

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Oliver looked after him for a moment. He had caught the look of sweet serenity on the idler's face, and the air of joyousness that seemed to linger behind him like a perfume, and it filled him with delight.

"There, Margaret! that 's what I call a happy man. I 'll wager you he has never done anything all his life but that which he loved to do — just lives out here and throws his heart wide open for every beautiful thing that can crowd into it. That 's the kind of a man I want to be. Oh! I 'm so glad I saw him."

Margaret was silent. She was walking ahead, her staff in her hand; the fallen trunks and heavy underbrush making it difficult for them to walk abreast.

"Do you think that he never had to work, to be able to enjoy himself as he does?" she asked over her shoulder, with a toss of her head.

"Perhaps — but he loved what he was doing."

"No, he did n't — he hated it — hated it all his life." The tone carried a touch of defiance that was new to Oliver. He stepped quickly after her, with a sudden desire to look into her face. Ten minutes, at least, had passed during which he had seen only the back of her head.

Margaret heard his step behind her and quick-

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ened her own. Something was disturbing the joyousness of our young Diana this lovely summer morning.

"What did the old fellow do for a living, Margaret?" Oliver called, still trying to keep up with Margaret's springing step.

"Sold lard and provisions, and over the counter, too," she answered, with a note almost of exultation in her voice (she was thinking of Mrs. Horn and Kennedy Square). "Mrs. Taft knows him and used to send him her bacon. He retired rich some years ago, and now he can sing all day if he wants to."

It was Oliver's turn to be silent. The tones of Margaret's voice had hurt him. For some minutes he made no reply. Then wheeling suddenly he sprang over a moss-covered trunk that blocked her path, stepped in front of her, and laid his hand on her shoulder.

"Not offended, Margaret, are you?" he asked, looking earnestly into her eyes.

"No — what nonsense! Of course not. Why do you ask?"

"Well, somehow you spoke as if you were."

"No, I did n't; I only said how dear Mr. Burton was, and he *is*. How silly you are! Come — we will be late for the camp."

They both walked on in silence, now, he

ahead this time, brushing aside the thick undergrowth that blocked the path.

The exultant tones in her voice which had hurt her companion, and which had escaped her unconsciously, still rang in her own ears. She felt ashamed of the outburst now as she watched him cutting the branches ahead of her, and thought how gentle and tender he had always been to her and how watchful over her comfort. She wondered at the cause of her frequent discontent. Then, like an evil spirit that would not down, there arose in her mind, as she walked on, the picture she had formed of Kennedy Square. She thought of his mother's imperious nature absorbing all the love of his heart and inspiring and guiding his every action and emotion; of the unpractical father — a dreamer and an enthusiast, the worst possible example he could have; of the false standards and class distinctions which had warped his early life and which were still dominating him. With an abrupt gesture of impatience she stood still in the path and looked down upon the ground. An angry flush suffused her face.

"What a stupid fool you are, Margaret Grant!" she burst out impatiently. "What are Kennedy Square and the whole Horn family to you?"

Oliver's halloo brought her to consciousness.

"Here 's that slant, Margaret — oh, such a lovely spot! Hurry up."

"The slant" had been built between two great trees, and stood on a little mound of earth surrounded by beds of velvety green moss — huge green winding sheets, under which lay the bodies of many giant pines and hemlocks. The shelter was made of bark and bedded down with boughs of sweet balsam. Outside, on a birch sapling, supported by two forked sticks, hung a rusty kettle. Beneath the rude spit, half hidden by the growth of the summer, lay the embers of the abandoned camp-fires that had warmed and comforted Hank and his companions the preceding winter.

Oliver raked the charred embers from under the tangled vines that hid them, while Margaret peeled the bark from a silver birch for kindling. Soon a curl of blue smoke mounted heavenward, hung suspended over the treetops, and then drifted away in scarfs of silver haze dimming the forms of the giant trunks.

Our young enthusiast watched the Diaz of a wood interior turn slowly into a Corot, and with a cry of delight was about to unstrap his own and Margaret's sketching kits, when the sun was suddenly blotted out by a heavy cloud, and the

quick gloom of a mountain storm, chilling the sunlit vista to a dull slate gray, settled over the forest. Oliver walked over to the brook for a better view of the sky, and came back bounding over the moss-covered logs as he ran. There was not a moment to lose if they would escape being drenched to the skin.

The outlook was really serious. Old Bald Face had not only lost his smile, — a marvellously happy one with the early sun upon his wrinkled countenance, — but he had put on his judgment-cap of gray clouds and had begun to thunder out his disapproval of everything about him. Moose Hillock evidently heard the challenge, for he was answering back in the murky darkness. Soon a cold, raw wind, which had been asleep in the hills for weeks, awoke with a snarl and started down the gorge. Then the little leaves began to quiver, the big trees to groan, in their anxiety not knowing what the will of the wind would be, and the merry little waves, that had chased each other all the morning over the sunny shallows of the brook, grew ashy pale as they looked up into the angry face of the Storm-God, and fled shivering to the shore.

Oliver whipped out his knife, stripped the heavy outer bark from a white birch, and be-

fore the dashing rain could catch up with the wind, had repaired the slant so as to make it water-tight — Hank had taught him this ; then he started another great fire in front of the slant and threw fresh balsam boughs on the bed that had rested Hank's tired limbs, and he and Margaret crept in and were secure.

The equanimity of Margaret's temper, temporarily disturbed by her vivid misconception of Kennedy Square, was restored. The dry shelter, the warm fire, the sense of escape from the elements, all filled her heart with gladness. Never since the day she met him on the bridge had she been so happy. Again, as when Oliver championed her in the old Academy schoolroom, there stole over her a vague sense of pleasure in being protected.

"Is n't it jolly ! " she said, as she sat hunched up beside him. "I'm as dry as a bone, not a drop on me."

Oliver was even more buoyant. There was something irresistibly cosey and comfortable in the shelter which he had provided for her, — something of warmth and companionship and rest. But more intensely enjoyable than all was the thought that he was taking care of a woman for the first time in his life, as it seemed to him ; and in a house of his own making, and

in a place, too, of his own choosing, surrounded by the big trees that he loved. He had even outwitted the elements — the wind and the rain and the chill — in her defence. Old Moose Hillock could bellow now and White Face roar, and the wind and rain vent their wrath, but Margaret, close beside him, would still be warm and dry and safe.

By this time she had hung her tam-o'-shanter and jacket on a nail that she had found in the bark over her head, and was arranging her hair.

"It 's just like life, Oliver, is n't it ? " she said, as she tightened the coil in her neck. "All we want, after all, is a place to get into out of the storm and wet,— not a big place, either."

"What kind of a place ? " He was on his knees digging a little trench with his knife, piling up the moist earth in miniature embankments, so that the dripping from the roof would not spatter this princess of his whom he had saved from the tempest outside.

"Oh, any kind of a place if you have people you 're fond of. I 'd love a real studio somewhere, and a few things hung about — some old Delft and one or two bits of stuff — and somebody to take care of me."

Oliver shifted his pipe in his mouth and looked up. Would she, withall her independence, really

like to have some one take care of her? He had seen no evidence of it.

"Who?" he asked. He had never heard her mention anybody's name — but then she had not told him everything.

He had dropped his eyes again, finishing the drain and flattening the boughs under her to make the seat the easier.

"Oh, some old woman, perhaps, like dear old Mrs. Mulligan." There was no coquetry in her tone. She was speaking truthfully out of her heart.

"Anything more?" Oliver's voice had lost its buoyancy now. The pipe was upside down, the ashes falling on his shirt.

"Yes — lots of portraits to paint."

"And a medal at the Salon?" asked Oliver, brushing off the waste of his pipe from his coat-sleeve.

"Yes, I don't mind, if my pictures deserve it," and she looked at him quizzically, while a sudden flash of humor lightened up her face. "What would *you* want, Mr. Happy-go-lucky, if you had your wish?"

"I, Madge, dear?" he exclaimed, with a sudden outburst of tenderness, raising his body erect and looking earnestly into her eyes, which were now within a hand's breadth of his own. She

winced a little, but it did not offend her, nor did she move an inch. "Oh, I don't know what I want. What I want, I suppose, is what I shall never have, little girl."

She was n't his little girl, or anybody else's, she thought to herself — she was firmly convinced of that fact. It was only one of his terms of endearment. He had them for everybody, even for Hank and for Mrs. Taft, whom he called "Taffy," and who loved to hear him say it, and she old enough to be his grandmother! She stole a look into his face. There was a cloud over it, a slight knitting of the brows, and a pained expression about the mouth that were new to her.

"I 'd like to be a painter," he continued, "but mother would never consent." As he spoke, he sank back from her slowly, his knees still bent under him. Then he added, with a sigh, "She would n't think it respectable. Anything but a painter, she says."

Margaret looked out through the forest and watched a woodpecker at work on the dry side of a hollow trunk, the side protected from the driving rain.

"And you would give up your career because she wants it? How do you know she 's right about it? And who 's to suffer if she 's wrong?

Be a painter, Oliver, if you want to! Your mother can't coddle you up forever! No mother should. Do what you can do best, and to please yourself, not somebody else," and then she laughed lightly as if to break the force of her words.

Oliver looked at her in indignation that any one, even Margaret, should speak so of his mother. It was the first time in all his life that he had heard her name mentioned without the profound reverence it deserved. Then a sense of the injustice of her words took possession of him, as the solemn compact he had made with his mother not to be a burden on her while the mortgage was unpaid, rose in his mind. This thought and Margaret's laugh softened any hurt her words had given him, although the lesson that they were intended to teach lingered in his memory for many days thereafter.

"You would not talk that way, Madge, if you knew my dear mother," he said quietly. "There is nothing in her life she loves better than me. She does n't want me to be a painter because" — He stopped, fearing she might not understand his answer.

"Go on — why not?" The laugh had faded out of her voice now, and a tone almost of defiance had taken its place.

"She says it is not the profession of a gentleman," he answered sadly. "I do not agree with her, but she thinks so, and nothing can shake her."

"If those are her opinions, I wonder what she would think of *me?*" There was a slight irritation in her voice — somehow she always became irritable when Oliver spoke of his mother. She was ashamed of it, but it was true.

All his anger was gone now. Whatever opinion the world might have on any number of things, there could be but one opinion of Madge. "She would *love* you, little girl," he burst out as he laid his hand on her arm, the first time he had ever touched her with any show of affection. "You 'd make her love you. She never saw anybody like you before, and she never will. That you are an artist would n't make any difference. It 's not the same with you. You 're a woman."

The girl's eyes again sought the woodpecker. It was stabbing away with all its might, driving its beak far into the yielding bark. It seemed in some way to represent her own mood. After a moment's thought she said thoughtfully as she rested her head on the edge of the slant, —

"Ollie, what is a gentleman?" She knew, she thought, but she wanted him to define it.

"My father is one," he said positively — "and so is yours;" and he looked inquiringly into her face.

"That depends on your standard. I don't know your father, but I do mine, and from what you have told me about yours I think they are about as different as two men can be. Answer my question, — what is a gentleman?" She was leaning over a little, and tucking a chip under her toes to keep the water away from her shoes. Her eyes sought his again.

"A gentleman, Madge — why, you know what a gentleman is. He is a man well born, well educated, and well bred. That 's the standard at home, — at least, that 's my mother's. Father's standard is the same, only he puts it in a different way. He says a gentleman is a man who tolerates other people's mistakes and who sympathizes with other people's troubles."

"Anything else?" She was searching his face now. There were some things she wanted to settle in her own mind.

"I don't think of anything else, Madge, dear, do you?" He was really dismissing the question. His thoughts were on something else, — the way her hair curled from under her worsted cap, and the way her pink ears nestled close to her head, especially the little indents at each

corner of her mouth. He liked their modelling.

"And so according to your mother's and father's ideas, and those of all your aristocratic people at home, Hank here could not be a gentleman if he tried?"

The idea was new to Oliver. He had become conscious now. What had gotten into Margaret to-day?

"Hank? No, certainly not. How could he?"

"By *being* a gentleman, Mr. Aristocrat. Not in clothes, mind you — nor money, nor furniture, nor wines, nor carriages, but in *heart*. Think a moment, Ollie," and her eyes snapped. "Hanks finds a robin that has tumbled out of its nest, and spends half a day putting it back. Hank follows you up the brook and sees you try to throw a fly into a pool, and he knows just how awkwardly you do it, for he 's the best fisherman in the woods; and yet you never see a smile cross his face, nor does he ever speak of it behind your back — not even to me. Hank walks across Moose Hillock to find old Jonathan Gordon to tell him he has some big trout in Loon Pond, so that the old man can have the fun of catching them and selling them afterward to the new hotel in the Notch. He has walked twenty-

four miles when he gets back. Do these things make Hank a gentleman, or not ? ''

" Then you don't believe in Sir Walter Raleigh, Miss Democrat, simply because he was a lord ? ''

" Yes — but I always thought he wore his old cloak that day on purpose, so he could be made an earl,'' and a ripple of laughter escaped her lips.

Oliver laughed too, sprang to his feet, and held out his hands so as to lift her up. None of these fine-drawn distinctions really interested him — certainly not on this day, when he was so happy. Why, he wondered, should she want to discuss theories and belief and creeds, with the beautiful forest all about and the sky breaking overhead ?

" Well, you 've walked over mine many a time, Miss Queen Elizabeth, and you have n't decorated me yet, nor made me an earl nor anything else for it, and I 'm not going to forgive you, either,'' and he rose to his feet. " Look ! Madge, look ! '' he cried, and sprang out into the path, pointing to the sunshine bursting through the trees. The storm had passed as suddenly as it had come. " Is n't it glorious ! Come here quick ! Don't wait a minute. I should try to get that with Naples yellow and a little chrome

— what do you think ? " he asked, when she stood beside him, half closing his eyes, to get the effect the better.

Margaret looked at him curiously for a moment. She did not answer. " I cannot fasten his mind on anything in which I am interested," she said to herself, with a sigh, " nor shall I ever overcome these prejudices which seem to be part of his very life."

She paused a moment, and an expression of pain passed over her face.

" Pale cadmium would be better," she said quietly, with a touch of indifference in her tone, and led the way out of the forest to the main road.

XV

MRS. TAFT'S FRONT PORCH

THE autumn fires were being kindled on the mountains, fires of maple, oak, and birch. Along the leaf-strewn roads the sumach blazed scarlet, and over the rude stone fences blood-red lines of fire followed the trend of leaf and vine. Golden pumpkins lay in the furrows of the corn; showers of apples carpeted the grass of the orchards; the crows flew in straight lines, and the busy squirrels worked from dawn till dark.

Over all settled the requiem haze of the dead summer, blurring the Notch and softening Moose Hillock to a film of gray against the pale sky.

It had been a summer of very great sweetness and charm, the happiest of Oliver's life. He had found that he could do fairly well the things that he liked to do best; that the technical difficulties that had confronted him when he began to paint were being surmounted as the weeks went by, and that the thing that had always been a pain to him had now become a pleasure, — pain, because, try as he might, the quality

of the result was always below his hopes; a pleasure, because some bit of bark, perhaps, or glint of light on moss-covered rock, or tender vista had at last stood out on his canvas with every tone of color true.

Only a painter can understand what all this meant to Oliver,—only an out-of-door painter, really. The "studio man," who reproduces an old study which years before has inspired him, or who evolves a composition from his inner consciousness, has no such thrills over his work. He may perhaps have other sensations, but they will lack the spontaneous outburst of enthusiasm over the old sketch.

And how glorious are the memories!

The victorious painter has been weeks over these same trees that have baffled him; he has painted them on gray days and sunny days; in the morning, at noon, and in the gloaming. He has loved their texture and the thousand little lights and darks, the sparkle of the black, green, or gray moss, and the delicate tones that played up and down their stalwart trunks. He has toiled in the heat of the day, his nerves on edge, and sometimes great drops of sweat on his troubled forehead. Now and then he has sprung from his seat for a farther-away look at his sketch. With a sigh and a heart bowed down

(Oh, how desolate are these hours!) he has noted how wooden and commonplace and mean and despicable his work was, — what an insult he has cast upon the beautiful yellow birch, this outdoor, motionless old model that has stood so patiently before him, posing all day without moving, its big arms above its head, its leaves and branches stock still, to make it all the easier for him.

Suddenly in all this depression, an inspiration has entered his dull brain; he will use burnt umber instead of Vandyke brown for the bark! or light chrome and indigo instead of yellow ochre and black for the green!

Presto! Ah, that 's like it! Another pat, and another, and still one more!

How quickly now the canvas loses its pasty mediocrity! How soon the paint and the brush-marks and the niggly little touches fade away and the *thing itself* comes out and says, "How do you do?" and that it is so glad to see him, and that it has been lurking behind these colors all day, trying to make his acquaintance, and he would have none of it. What good friends he and the sketch have become now; how proud he is of it, and of possessing it, and of *creating* it! Then little quivery-quavers go creeping up and down his spine and away out

to his finger-tips; and he *knows* that he has something really *good*.

He carries it home in his hand, oh, so carefully (he strapped its predecessor on his back yesterday without caring), and a dozen times he stops to look at its dear face, propping it against a stump for a better light, just to see if he had not been mistaken after all. He can hardly wait until it is dark enough to see how it looks by gaslight, or candle-light, or kerosene, or whatever else he may have in his quarters. Years after, the dear old thing is still hanging on his studio wall. He has never sold it nor given it away. He could not; it was too valuable, too constantly giving him good advice and showing him what the thing *was* — not what he thought it was, or hoped it was, or would like it to be, but what it *was*.

Yes, there may be triumphs that come to men digging away on the dull highway of life, — triumphs in business, in politics, in discovery, in law, medicine, and science. To each and every profession and pursuit there must come, and does come, a time when a rush of uncontrollable feeling surges through the victor's soul, crowning long hours of work; but they are as dry ashes to a thirsty man compared to the boundless ecstasy a painter feels when, with a

becaked palette, some half-dried tubes of color, and a few worn-out, ragged brushes, he compels a six by nine canvas to glow with life and truth.

All this Oliver knew and felt. The work of the summer, attended at first with a certain sense of disappointment, had during the last few weeks of sojourn, as his touch grew surer, not only become a positive pleasure to him, but had produced an exaltation that had kept our young gentleman walking on clouds most of the time, his head in the blue ether.

Margaret's nice sense of color and correct eye had hastened this result. She could grasp at the first glance the masses of light and shade, giving each its proper value in the composition. She and Oliver really studied out their compositions together before either one set a palette, a most desirable practice, by the way, not only for tyros, but for Academicians.

This relying upon Margaret's judgment had become a habit with Oliver. He not only consulted her about his canvases, but about everything else that concerned him. He had never formulated in his mind what this kind of companionship meant to him (we never do when we are in the midst of it), nor had he ever considered what would become of him when the

summer was over, and the dream would end, and they each would return to the customary dulness of life, — a life where there would be no blue ether, nor clouds, nor vanishing-points, nor values, nor tones, nor anything else that had made their heaven of a summer so happy.

They had both lived in this paradise for weeks without once bringing themselves to believe it could ever end (why do not such episodes last forever?) when Oliver awoke one morning to the fact that the fatal day of their separation would be upon him in a week's time or less. Margaret, with her more practical mind, had seen farther ahead than Oliver, and her laugh, in consequence, had been less spontaneous of late, and her interest in her work and in Oliver's less intense. She was overpowered by another sensation: she had been thinking of the day, now so near, when the old stage would drive up to Mrs. Taft's pasture gate, and her small trunk and trap would be carried down on Hank's back and tumbled in, and she would go back alone to duty and the prosaic life of a New England village.

Neither of them supposed that it was anything else but the grief of parting that afflicted them, until there came a memorable autumn night — a night that sometimes comes to the

blessed! — when the moon swam in the wide sky, breasting the soft white clouds, and when Oliver and Margaret sat together on the porch of Mrs. Taft's cottage, — he on the steps at her feet, she leaning against the railing, the moonlight full upon her face.

They had been there since sunset. They had known all day what was in each other's mind, but they had avoided discussing it. Now they must face it.

"You go to-morrow, Madge?" Oliver asked. He knew she did. He spoke as if announcing a fact.

"Yes."

The shrill cry of a loon, like the cry of a child in pain, sifted down the ravine from the lake above and died away among the pines soughing in the night wind. Oliver paused for a moment to listen, and went on, —

"I don't want you to go. I don't know what I am going to do without you, Madge," he said, with a long indrawn sigh.

"You are coming to us at Brookfield, you know, on your way back to New York. That is something." She glanced at him with a slightly anxious look in her eyes, as if waiting for his answer to reassure her.

He rose from his seat and began pacing the

gravel. Now and then he would stop, flick a pebble from its bed with his foot, and walk on. She heard the sound of his steps, but she did not look at him, even when he stopped abruptly in front of her.

"Yes, I know, but — that will only make it worse." He was leaning over her now, one foot on the steps. "It tears me all to pieces when I think this is our last night. We 've had such a good time all summer! You don't want to go home, do you?"

"No — I 'd rather stay." The words came slowly, as if it gave her pain to utter them.

"Well, stay, then!" he answered with some animation. "What difference does a few days make? Let us have another week. We have n't been over to Bog Eddy yet; please stay, Madge."

"No, I must go, Ollie."

"But we 'll be so happy, little girl."

"Life is not only being happy, Ollie. It 's very real sometimes. It is to me," and a faint sigh escaped her.

"Well, but why make it real to-morrow? Let us make it real next week, not now."

"It would be just as hard for you next week. Why postpone it?" She was looking at him now, watching his face closely.

Her answer seemed to hurt him. With an impatient gesture he straightened himself, turned as if to resume his walk, and then, pushing away the end of her skirt, sat down beside her.

"I don't understand your theories, Madge, and I 'm not going to discuss them. I don't want to talk of any such things; I 'm too unhappy to-night. When I look ahead and think that if the Academy should not open, you would n't come back at all, and that I might not see you for months, I 'm all broken up. What am I going to do without you, Madge?" His voice was quivering, and a note of pain ran through it.

"Oh, you will have your work — you 'll do just what you did before I came up." She was holding herself in by main strength, — why she could not tell, — fighting an almost irresistible impulse to hide her face on his breast and cry.

"What good will that do me when you are gone?" he burst out, with a quick toss of his head and a certain bitterness in his tone.

"Well, but you were very happy before you saw me."

Again the cry of the loon came down the ravine. He turned, and with one of his quick, impatient gestures that she knew so well, put his hand on her shoulder.

"Stop, Madge, stop! Don't talk that way. I

can't stand it. Look at me!" The pain had become unbearable now. "You've got to listen. I can't keep it back, and I won't. I never met anybody that I loved as I do you. I didn't think so at first. I never thought I could think so, but it's true. You are not my sweetheart, nor my friend, nor my companion, nor anything else that ever came into my life. You are my very breath, my soul, my being. I never want you to leave me. I should never have another happy day if I thought this was to end our life. I laid awake half the night trying to straighten it out, and I can't, and there's no straightening it out, and never will be unless you love me. Oh, Madge! Madge! Don't turn away from me. Let me be part of you — part of everything you do — and are — and will be!"

He caught her hand in his warm palm and laid his cheek upon it. Still holding it fast he raised his head, laid his other hand upon her hair, smoothing it softly, and looked long and earnestly into her eyes as if searching for something hidden in their depths. Then, in a voice of infinite tenderness, he said, —

"Madge, darling! Tell me true — could you ever love me?"

She sat still, her eyes fixed on his, her hand nestling in his grasp. Then slowly and care-

fully, one at a time, she loosened with her other hand the fingers that lay upon her hair, held them for an instant in her own, bent her head, and touched them with her lips.

XVI

SOME DAYS AT BROOKFIELD FARM

BROOKFIELD village lay in a great wide meadow through which strayed one of Moose Hillock's lost brooks — a brook tired out with leaping from boulder to boulder and taking headers into deep pools, and plunging down between narrow walls of rock. Here in the meadow it caught its breath and rested, idling along, stopping to bathe a clump of willows; whispering to the shallows; laughing gently with another brook that had locked arms with it, the two gossiping together under their breath as they floated on through the tall grasses fringing the banks, or circled about the lily pads growing in the eddies. In the middle of the meadow, just where two white ribbons of roads crossed, was a clump of trees pierced by a church spire. Outside of this bower of green, a darker green than the velvet meadow grass about it, glistened the roofs and windows of the village houses.

All this Oliver saw, at a distance, from the top of the stage.

As he drew nearer and entered the main street, the clump of trees became giant elms, their interlaced branches making shaded cloisters of the village streets. The buildings now became more distinct, — first a tavern with a swinging sign, and across the open common a quaint church with a white tower.

At the end of the avenue of trees, under the biggest of the elms, stood an old-fashioned farmhouse, its garden gate opening on the highway, and its broad acres, one hundred or more, reaching to the line of the vagabond brook.

This was Margaret's home.

The stage stopped; the hair trunk and sketch-trap were hauled out of the dust-begrimed boot and deposited on the sidewalk at the foot of the giant elm. Oliver swung back the gate and walked up the path in the direction of the low-roofed porch, upon which lay a dog, which raised its head and at the first click of the latch came bounding toward him, barking with every leap.

"Need n't be afraid, she won't hurt you!" shouted a gray-haired man in his shirt-sleeves, who had risen from his seat on the porch, and who was now walking down the garden path. "Get out, Juno! I guess you 're the young

man that 's been painting with our Margaret up in the Gorge. She 's been expecting you all morning. Little dusty, warn't it ? "

Oliver's face brightened up. This must be Margaret's father.

" Mr. Grant, I suppose ? "

" Yes, that 's what they call me — Silas Grant. Let me take your bag. My son John will be here in a minute, and will help you in with your trunk. Need n't worry, it 's all right where it is. Folks are middling honest about here," he added, with a dry laugh, and his hand closed on his guest's, — a cold, limp, dead-fish sort of a hand, Oliver thought.

Oliver said he was sure of it, and that he hoped Miss Margaret was well, and the old man said she was, " thank you," and Oliver surrendered the bag, — it was his sketch-trap, — and the two walked toward the house. During the mutual greetings the dog sniffed at Oliver's knees and looked up into his face.

" And I suppose this is Juno," our hero said, stopping to pat her head. " Good dog — you don't remember me ? " It seemed easier, somehow, to converse with Juno than with her master. The dog wagged her tail, but gave no indications of uncontrollable joy at meeting her rescuer again.

"Oh, you 've seen her? She 's Margaret's dog, you know."

"Yes, I know, but she 's forgotten me. I saw her before I ever knew — your daughter." It was a narrow escape, but he saved himself in time. "Blessed old dog," he said to himself, and patted her again.

By the time he had reached the porch steps he had made, unconsciously to himself, a mental inventory of his host's special features: tall, sparsely built, with stooping shoulders and long arms, the big hands full of cold knuckles with rough finger-tips (Oliver found that out when his own warm fingers closed over them); thin face, with high cheek bones showing above his closely cropped beard and whiskers; gray eyes, — steady, steel-gray eyes, hooded by white eyebrows stuck on like two tufts of cotton wool; nose big and strong; square jaw hanging on a hinge that opened and shut with each sentence, the upper part of the face remaining motionless as a mask. Oliver remembered having once seen a toy ogre with a jaw and face that worked in the same way. He had caught, too, the bend of his thin legs, the hump of the high shoulders, and saw the brown skin of the neck showing through the close-cut white hair. Suddenly a feeling of repugnance amount-

ing almost to a shrinking dislike of the man took possession of him, — it is just such trifles that turn the scales of likes and dislikes for all of us. "Could this really be Margaret's father?" he said to himself. Through whose veins, then, had all her charm and loveliness come? Certainly not from this cold man without grace of speech or polish of manner.

This feeling of repugnance had come with a flash, and in a flash it was gone. On the top step of the low piazza stood a young girl in white, a rose in her hair, her arm around a silver-haired old lady in gray silk, with a broad white handkerchief crossed over her bosom.

Oliver's hat was off in an instant.

Margaret came down one step to greet him and held out both her hands. "Oh, we are so glad to welcome you!" Then turning to her companion, she said, "Mother, this is Mr. Horn, who has been so good to me all summer."

The old lady — she was very deaf — cupped one hand behind her ear, and with a gracious smile extended the other to Oliver.

"I am so pleased you came, sir, and I want to thank you for being so kind to our daughter. Her brother John could not go with her, and husband and I are most too old to leave home now." The voice was as sweet and musical as

a child's, not the high-keyed, strained tone of most deaf people. When they all stood on the porch level, Margaret touched Oliver's arm.

"Speak slowly and distinctly, Ollie," she whispered, "then mother can hear you."

Oliver smiled in assent, took the old lady's thin fingers, and with a cordiality the more pronounced because of a certain guilty sense he had for his feeling of repugnance to her father, said, —

"Oh, but think what a delight it was for me to be with her. Every day we painted together, and you can't imagine how much she taught me; you know there is nobody in the Academy class who draws as well as your daughter." A light broke in Margaret's eyes at this, but she let him go on. "She has told you, of course, of all the good times we have had while we were at work" (Margaret had, but not all of them). "It is I who should thank *you*, not only for letting Miss Margaret stay so long, but for wanting me to come to you here in your beautiful home. It is my first visit to this — but you are standing, I beg your pardon," and he looked about for a chair.

There was only one chair on the porch; it was under Silas Grant.

"No, don't disturb yourself, Mr. Horn; I

prefer standing," Mrs. Grant answered, with a deprecatory gesture as if to detain Oliver. No one in Brookfield ever intruded on Silas Grant's rights to his chair, not even his wife.

Silas heard, but he did not move ; he had performed his duty as host ; it was the womenfolk's turn now to be pleasant. What he wanted was to be let alone. All this was in his face, as he sat hunched up between the arms of the splint rocker.

Despite the old lady's protest, Oliver made a step toward the seated man. His impulse was to suggest to his host that the lady whom he had honored by making his wife was at the moment standing on her two little feet while the lord of the manor was quietly reposing upon the only chair on the piazza, a fact doubtless forgotten by his Imperial Highness.

Mr. Grant had read at a glance the workings of the young man's mind, and knew exactly what Oliver wanted, but he did not move. Something in the bend of Oliver's back as he bowed to his wife had irritated him. He had rarely met Southerners of Oliver's class — never one so young — and was unfamiliar with their ways. This one, he thought, had evidently copied the airs of a dancing master ; the wave of Oliver's hand — it was Richard's in reality,

as were all the boy's gestures — and the fine speech he had just made to his wife proved it. Instantly the instinctive doubt of the Puritan, questioning the sincerity of whatever is gracious or spontaneous, was roused in Silas's mind. From that moment he became suspicious of the boy's genuineness.

The old lady, however, was still gazing into the boy's face, unconscious of what either her husband or her guest was thinking.

"I am so glad you like our mountains, Mr. Horn," she continued. "Mr. Lowell wrote his beautiful lines, 'What is so rare as a day in June,' in our village, and Mr. Longfellow never lets a summer pass without spending a week with us. And you had a comfortable ride down the mountains, and were the views enjoyable?"

"Oh, too beautiful for words!" It was Margaret this time, not the scenery; he could not take his eyes from her, as he caught the beauty of her throat against the soft white of her dress, and the exquisite tint of the October rose in contrast with the autumnal browns of her hair. Never had he dreamed she could be so lovely. He could not believe for one moment that she was the Margaret he had known — any one of the Margarets, in fact. Certainly not that one of the Academy school, in blue gingham with

her drawing-board in her lap, alone, self-poised, and unapproachable, among a group of art students; or that other one in a rough mountain skirt, stout shoes, and a tam-o'-shanter, the gay and fearless companion, the comrade, the co-worker. This Margaret was a vision in white, with arms bare to the elbow — oh, such beautiful arms! — and the grace and poise of a duchess, a Margaret to be reverenced as well as loved, a woman to bend low to.

During this episode, in which Silas sat studying the various expressions that flitted across Oliver's face, Mr. Grant shifted uneasily in his chair. At last his jaws closed with a snap, while the two tufts of cotton wool, drawn together by a frown, deeper than any which had yet crossed his face, made a straight line of white. Oliver's enthusiastic outburst and the gesture which accompanied it had removed Silas Grant's last doubt. His mind was now made up.

The young fellow, however, rattled on, oblivious now of everything about him but the joy of Margaret's presence.

"The view from the bend of the road was especially fine!" he burst forth again, his eyes still on hers. "You remember, Miss Margaret, your telling me to look out for it?" (He could n't stand another minute of this unless she

joined in the talk). "In my own part of the State we have no great mountains nor any lovely brooks full of trout. And the quantity of deer that are killed every winter about here quite astonishes me. Why, Mr. Pollard's son Hank, so he told me, shot fourteen last winter, and there were over one hundred killed around Moose Hillock. You see, our coast is flat, and many of the farms in my section run down to the water. We have, it is true, a good deal of game, but nothing like what you have here," and he shrugged his shoulders, and laughed lightly as if in apology for referring to such things, in view of all the wealth of the mountains about him.

"What kind of game have you got?" asked Mr. Grant, twisting his head and looking at Oliver from under the straight line of cotton wool.

Oliver turned his head toward the speaker. "Oh, wild geese, and canvas-back ducks, and" —

"And negroes?" There was a harsh note in Silas's voice which sounded like a saw when it clogs in a knot, but Oliver did not notice it. He was too happy to notice anything but the girl beside him.

"Oh, yes, plenty of them," and he threw

back his head, laughing this time until every tooth flashed white.

"You hunt them, too, don't you? With dogs, most of the time, I hear." There was no mistaking the bitterness in his voice now.

The boy's face sobered in an instant. He felt as if some one had shot at him from behind a tree.

"Not that I ever saw, sir," he answered quickly, straightening himself, a peculiar light in his eyes. "We love ours."

"Love 'em? Well, you don't treat 'em as if you loved 'em."

Margaret saw the cloud on Oliver's face and made a step toward her father.

"Mr. Horn lives in the city, father, and never sees such things."

"Well, if he does he knows all about it. You own negroes, don't you?" The voice was louder, the manner a trifle more insistent. Oliver could hardly keep his temper. Only Margaret's anxious face held him in check.

"No, not now, sir. My father freed all of his." The tones were thin and cold. Margaret had never heard any such sound before from those laughing lips.

Silas Grant was leaning forward out of his chair. The iron jaw was doing the talking now.

"Where are these negroes?" he persisted.

"Two of them are living with us, sir. They are in my father's house now."

"Rather shiftless kind of help, I guess. You 've got to watch 'em all the time, I hear. Steal everything they get their hands on, don't they?" This was said with a dry, hard laugh that was meant to be conciliatory, as if he expected Oliver to agree with him now that he had had his say.

Oliver turned quickly toward his host's chair. For a moment he was so stunned and hurt that he could hardly trust himself to speak. He looked up and saw the expression of pain on Margaret's face, and instantly remembered where he was and who was offending him.

"Our house servants, Mr. Grant, are part of our home," he said in a low, determined voice, without a trace of anger. "Old Malachi, who was my father's body servant, and who is now our butler, is as much beloved by every one as if he were one of the family. For myself, I can never remember the time when I did not love Malachi."

Before her father could answer, Margaret had her hand on Oliver's shoulder.

"Don't tell all your good stories to father now," she said, with a grateful smile. "Wait

until after dinner, when we can all hear them. Come, Mr. Horn, I know you want to get the dust out of your eyes." Then in an aside, "Don't mind him, Ollie. It 's only father's way, and he 's the dearest father in the world when you understand him," and she pressed his arm meaningly as they walked to the door.

Before they reached the threshold the gate swung to with a click, and a young man with a scythe slung over his shoulder strode up the path. He was in the garb of a farm hand, trousers tucked into his boots, shirt open at the throat, and head covered by a coarse straw hat. This shaded a good-natured, sunburnt face, lighted by two bright blue eyes.

"Oh, here comes my brother John!" Margaret cried. "Hurry up, John — here 's Mr. Horn."

The young man quickened his pace, stopped long enough to hang the scythe on the porch rail, lifted his hat from his head, and running up the short flight of steps, held out his hand cordially to Oliver, who advanced to meet him.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Horn. Madge has told us all about you. Excuse my rig — we are short of men on the farm, and I took hold. I 'm glad of the chance, for I get precious little exercise since I left college. You came from East

Branch by morning stage, I suppose? Oh, is that your trunk dumped out in the road? What a duffer I was not to know! Wait a minute. I 'll bring it in," and he sprang down the steps.

"No, let me," cried Oliver, running after him. He had not thought of his trunk since he had helped stow it in the boot outside Ezra Pollard's gate — but then he had been on his way to Margaret's!

"No, you won't. Stay where you are. Don't let him come, Madge."

The two young men raced down the path, Juno scampering after them. John, who could outrun any man at Dartmouth, vaulted over the fence and had hold of the brass handle before Oliver could open the gate.

"Fair play!" cried Oliver, and they each grasped a handle — either one could have held it out at arm's length with one hand — and brought it up the garden path, puffing away in pantomime as if it weighed a ton, and into the house. There they deposited it in the bedroom that was to be Oliver's during the two days of his visit at Brookfield Farm, Margaret clapping her hands in high glee, and her mother holding back the door for them to pass in.

Silas Grant watched the young fellows until they disappeared inside the door, lifted himself

slowly from his seat by his long arms, stretched himself, with a yawn, to his full height, and said aloud to himself as he pushed his chair back against the wall, —

"His father 's got a negro for body servant, has he, and a negro for butler? Just like 'em! They all want somebody to wait on 'em."

At dinner Oliver sat on Mrs. Grant's right — her best ear, she said — Margaret next, and John opposite. The father was at the foot, in charge of the carving knife.

During the pauses in the talk Oliver's eyes wandered around the room, falling on the queer paper lining the walls, — hunting scenes, with red-coated fox hunters leaping five-barred gates; on the sideboard covered with silver, but bare of a decanter — only a pitcher filled with cider, which Hopeful Prime, the servant, a woman of forty in spectacles, and who took part in the conversation, brought from the cellar; and finally on a family portrait that hung above the fireplace. A portrait was always a loadstone to Oliver.

Mrs. Grant had been watching his glance.

"That 's Mr. Grant 's great-uncle, old Governor Shaw," she said, with a pleased smile; "and the next one to it is Margaret's great-grandmother. This one" — and she turned

partly in her chair and pointed to a face Oliver thought he had seen before, where, he could n't remember — " is John Quincy Adams. He was my father's most intimate friend," and a triumphant expression overspread her face.

Oliver smiled too, inwardly, to himself. The talk, to his great surprise, reminded him of Kennedy Square. Family portraits were an inexhaustible topic of conversation in most of its homes. He had never thought before that people at the North had any ancestors, — none they were very proud of.

John looked up and winked. " Great scheme naming me after his Royal Highness," he said in an undertone. " Sure road to the White House; they thought I 'd make a good third."

Mrs. Grant went on, not having heard a word of John's aside, " This table you 're eating from once belonged to Mr. Adams. He gave it to my father, who often spent a week at a time with him in the White House."

" And I wish he was there now," interrupted Silas from the foot of the table. " He 'd straighten out this snarl we 're drifting into. Looks to me as if there would be some powder burnt before this thing is over. What do your people say about it ? " and he nodded at Oliver. He had served the turkey, and was now sharp-

ening the carver for the boiled ham, trying the edge with his thumb, as Shylock did.

"I have n't been at home for some time, sir," replied Oliver in a courteous tone, — he intended to be polite to the end, — "and so I cannot say. My father's letters seem to be very anxious, but mother does n't think there 'll be any trouble; at least she said so in her last letter."

Silas looked up from under the tufts of cotton wool. Were the mothers running the politics of the South, he wondered?

"And there 's another thing you folks might as well remember. We 're not going to let you break up the Union, and we 're not going to pay you for your slaves, either," and he plunged the fork into the ham that the spectacled waitress had laid before him, and rose in his chair, the knife poised in his hand to carve it the better.

"Mr. Horn has n't got any slaves to sell, father. Did n't you hear him say so? His father freed his," laughed Margaret. Her father's positiveness never really worried her. She rather liked it at times. It was only because she had read in Oliver's face the impression her father was making upon him that she essayed to soften the force of his remarks.

"I heard him, Margaret; I heard him. Glad of it, but he 's the only man from his parts that I ever heard who did. The others won't give 'em up so easy. They hung John Brown for trying to help the negroes free themselves, don't forget that." Oliver looked up and knitted his brows. Silas saw it. "I 'm not meaning any offence to you, young man," he said quickly, waving the knife toward Oliver. "I 'm taking this question on broad grounds. If I had my way I 'd teach those slave-drivers," and he buried the knife in the yielding ham, "that" —

"They did just right to hang him," interrupted John. "Brown was a fanatic, and ought to have stayed at home. No one is stronger than the law. That 's where old Ossawatomie Brown made a mistake." Everybody was entitled to express his or her opinion in this house except the dear old mother. Margaret's fearless independence of manner and thought had been nurtured in fertile soil.

Mrs. Grant had been vainly trying to get the drift of the conversation, her hand behind her ear.

"Parson Brown, did you say, John? He married us, sir," and she turned to Oliver. "He lived here over forty years. The church that you passed was where he preached."

John laughed, and so did Silas, at the old lady's mistake, but Oliver only became the more attentive to his hostess. He was profoundly grateful to the reverend gentleman for coming out of his grave at this opportune moment and diverting the talk into other channels. Why did they want to bother him with all this talk about slavery and the South, when he was so happy he could hardly stay in his skin? It set his teeth on edge; he wished that the dinner were over and everybody down at the bottom of the sea but Margaret; he had come to see his sweetheart, not to talk slavery.

"Yes, I saw the church," and for the rest of the dinner Oliver was entertained with the details in the life of the Rev. Leonidas Brown, including his manner of preaching, the crowds who would go to hear him, the number converted under the good man's ministrations, to all of which Oliver listened with a closeness of attention that would have surprised those who knew him unless they had discovered that his elbow had found Margaret's during the recital, and that the biography of every member of Brown's congregation might have been added to that of the beloved pastor without wearying him in the slightest degree.

When the nuts were served — Silas broke

his with his fingers — his host made one more effort to draw Oliver into a discussion, but Margaret stopped it by exclaiming suddenly, —

"Where shall Mr. Horn smoke, mother?" She wanted Oliver to herself, — the family had had him long enough.

"Why, does he want to *smoke?*" she answered with some consternation.

"Yes, of course he does. All painters smoke."

"Well, I don't know; let me see." The old lady hesitated as if seeking the choice between two evils. "I suppose in the sitting-room. No, the library would be better."

"Oh, I won't smoke at all if your mother does not like it," Oliver protested, springing from his chair.

"Oh, yes, you will," interrupted John. "I never smoke, and father don't, but I know how good a pipe tastes. Let's go into the library."

Margaret gave Oliver the big chair and sat beside him. It was a small room, the walls almost hidden with books, the windows filled with flowering plants. There was a long table piled up with magazines and pamphlets, and an open fireplace, the wall above the mantel covered with framed pictures of weeping willows worked out with hair of dead relatives, and the

mantel itself with faded daguerreotypes propped apart like half-opened clam shells.

Mr. Grant on leaving the dining-room walked slowly to the window without looking to the right or left, dropped into a chair, and gazed out through the leaves of a geranium. The meal was over. Now he wanted rest and quiet. When Mrs. Grant entered the library and saw the wavy lines of tobacco smoke that were drifting lazily about the room, she stopped, evidently annoyed and uneasy. No such sacrilege of her library had taken place for years, — not since her Uncle Reuben had come home from China. The waves of smoke must have caught the expression on her face, for she had hardly reached Oliver's chair before they began stealing along the ceiling in long, slanting lines until they reached the doorway, when, with a sudden swoop as if frightened, and without once looking back, they escaped into the hall.

The dear lady laid her hand on Oliver's shoulder, bent over him in a tender, motherly way, and said, —

"Do you think it does you any good?"

"I don't know that it does."

"Why should you do it, then?"

"But I won't if you'd rather I'd not." Oliver sprang to his feet, took his pipe from his

mouth, and was about to cross the room to knock the ashes from it into the fireplace when Margaret laid her hand on his arm.

"No, don't stop. Mother is very foolish about some things. Smoking is one of them."

"But I can't smoke, darling," he said in an undertone, "if your mother objects." The mother law was paramount, to say nothing of the courtesy required of him. Then he added, with a meaning look in his eyes, "Can't we get away some place where we can talk?" Deaf mothers are a blessing sometimes.

Margaret pressed his hand; her fingers were still closed over the one holding the pipe.

"In a moment, Ollie," and she rose and went into the adjoining room.

Mrs. Grant went to her husband's side, and in her gentle mission of peace put her arm around his neck, patting his shoulder and talking to him in a low tone, her two yellow-white curls streaming down over the collar of his coat. Silas slipped his hand over his wife's, and for an instant caressed it tenderly with his cold, bony fingers. Then seeing Oliver's eyes turning his way, he drew in his shoulders with a quick movement and looked askance at his guest. Any public show of affection was against Silas's creed and code. If people wanted to hug each

other, better do it upstairs, he would say, not where everybody was looking on, certainly not this young man, who was enough of a molly-coddle already.

John, now that Margaret had gone, moved over from the lounge and took her seat, and the two young men launched out into a discussion of flies and worms and fish bait, and whether frogs' legs were better than minnows in fishing for pickerel, and what was the best-sized shot for woodcock and Jack-snipe. Oliver told of the ducking-blinds of the Chesapeake, and of how the men sat in wooden boxes sunk to the water's edge, with the decoy ducks about them, and shot the flocks as they flew over. And John told of a hunting trip he had made with two East Branch guides, and how they went loaded for deer and came back with a bear and two cubs. And so congenial did they find each other's society that before Margaret returned to the room — she had gone into her studio to light the lamp under the teakettle — the two young fellows had discovered that they were both very good fellows indeed, especially Oliver and especially John, and Oliver had half promised to come up in the winter and go into camp with John, and John met him more than halfway with a promise to accept Oliver's invitation for

a week's visit in Kennedy Square the next time he went home, if that happy event ever took place, when they would both go down to Carroll's Island for a crack at a canvas-back.

This had gone on for ten minutes or more — ten minutes is an absurdly long period of time under certain circumstances — when Margaret's voice was heard in the doorway.

"Come, John, you and Mr. Horn have talked long enough; I want to show him my studio if you 'll spare him a moment."

John knew when to spare and when not to — oh, a very intelligent brother was John! He did not follow and talk for another hour of what a good time he would have duck-shooting, and of what togs he ought to carry — spoiling everything; nor did he send his mother in to help Margaret entertain their guest. None of these stupid things did John do. He said he would go down to the post-office if Oliver did n't mind, and would see him at supper; and Margaret said that that was a very clever idea, as nobody had gone for the mail that day, and there were sure to be letters, and not to forget to ask for hers. Awfully sensible brother was John. Why aren't there more like him?

Entering Margaret's studio was like going back to Moose Hillock. There were sketches

of the interior of the schoolhouse, and of the children, and of the teacher who had taught the year before. There was Mrs. Taft sitting on that very porch, peeling potatoes, with a tin pan in her lap — would they ever forget that porch and the moonlight and the song of the tree-toads and the cry of the loon? There was Hank in corduroys, with an axe over his shoulder; and Hank in a broad straw hat and no shoes, with a fishing-pole in one hand; and Hank chopping wood, the chips littering the ground. There was Ezra Pollard sitting in his buckboard with a buffalo robe tucked about him, and Samanthy by his side. And best of all, and in the most prominent place, too, there was the original drawing of the Milo — the one she was finishing when Oliver upset Judson, and which, strange to say, was the only Academy drawing which Margaret had framed — besides scores and scores of sketches of people and things and places that she had made in years gone by.

The room itself was part of an old portico which had been walled up. It had a fireplace at one end, holding a Franklin stove, and a skylight overhead, the light softened by green shades. Here she kept her own books ranged on shelves over the mantel; and in the niches

and corners and odd spaces a few rare prints and proofs — two Guido Renis and a Leonardo, both by Raphael Morghen. Against the wall was an old clothes-press with brass handles, its drawers filled with sketches, as well as a lounge covered with chintz and heaped up with cushions. The door between the studio and library had been taken off, and was now replaced by a heavy red curtain. Margaret had held it aside for Oliver to enter, and it had dropped back by its own weight, shutting them both safely in.

I don't know what happened when that heavy red curtain swung into place, and mother, father, sea, sky, sun, moon, stars, and the planets, with all that in them is, were shut out for a too brief moment.

And if I did know I would not tell.

We go through life, and we have all sorts of sensations. We hunger, and are fed. We are thirsty, and reach an oasis. We are homeless, and find shelter. We are ill, and again walk the streets. We dig and delve and strain every nerve and tissue, and the triumph comes at last, and with it often riches and honor. All these things send shivers of delight through us, and for the moment we spread our wings and soar heavenward. But when we take in our arms the girl we love, and hold close her fresh, sweet face,

with its trusting eyes, and feel her warm breath on our cheeks, and the yielding figure next our heart, knowing all the time how mean and good-for-nothing and how entirely unworthy of even tying her shoestrings we are, we experience a something compared with which all our former flights heavenward are but the flutterings of bats in a cave.

And the blessed John did not come back until black, dark night! — not until it was so dark that you could n't see your hand before you or the girl beside you, which is nearer the truth; not until the stout woman in spectacles, with the conversational habit, had brought in a lard-oil lamp with a big globe, which she set down on Margaret's table among her books and papers. And when John did come, and poked his twice-blessed head between the curtains, it was not to sit down inside and talk until supper-time, but to say that it was getting cold outside and that they ought to have a fire if they intended to sit in the studio after supper. (Oh, what a trump of a brother!) And if they did n't mind he 'd send Hopeful right away with some chips to start it. All of which Miss Hopeful Prime accomplished, talking all the time to Margaret as she piled up the logs, and not forgetting a final word to Oliver as she left the room, to the effect

that she "guessed it must be kind o' comfortin' to set by a fire," — such luxuries, of course, to her thinking, being unknown in his tropical land, where the blacks went naked and the children lay about in the sun munching watermelons and bananas.

What an afternoon it had been! They had talked of the woods and their life under the trees; of the sketches they made and how they could improve them, and would; of the coming winter and the prospect of the school being opened, and what it meant to them if it did, and how much more if it did not, and she be compelled to remain in Brookfield with Oliver away all winter in New York, and of a thousand and one other things that lay nearest their hearts, and with which neither you nor I have anything to do.

It was good, Margaret thought, to talk to him in this way, and see the quick response in his eyes and feel how true and helpful he was.

She had dreaded his coming — dreaded the contrasts which she knew his presence among them would reveal. She knew how punctiliously polite he was, and how brusque and positive was her father. She realized, too, how outspoken and bluff was John, and how unaccustomed both he and her dear deaf mother were to the

ways of the outside world. What would Oliver think of them ? What effect would her home life have on their future ? she kept saying to herself.

Not that she was ashamed of her people, certainly not of her father, who really occupied a higher position than any of his neighbors. He was not only a deacon in the church and chairman of the school board, but he had been twice sent to the legislature, and at one time had been widely discussed as a fitting candidate for governor. Nobody in Brookfield thought the less of him because of his peculiarities, — many of his neighbors liked him the better for his brusqueness ; they believed in a man who had the courage of his convictions and who spoke out, no matter whose toes he trod on.

Nor could she be ashamed of her brother John, so kind to everybody, so brave and generous, and such a good brother. Only she wished that he had some of Oliver's courtesy, and that he would take off his hat when a lady spoke to him in the road, and keep it off till she bade him replace it, and observe a few of the other amenities ; but even with all his defects of manner — all of which she had never before noticed — he was still her own dear brother John, and she loved him dearly.

And as for her mother, that most gentle and gracious of women, — that one person in the house who was considerate of everybody's feelings and tolerant of everybody's impatience! What could Oliver find in her except what was adorable? As she thought of her mother, a triumphant smile crossed her face. "That 's the one member of the Grant family," she said to herself, "whom my fine gentleman must admit is the equal of any one of his toplofty kinsfolk in Kennedy Square or anywhere else." Which outburst the scribe must admit to himself was but another proof of the fact that no such thing as true democracy exists the world over.

None of these thoughts had ever crossed her mind up to the time she met Oliver on the bridge that first sunny morning. He had never discussed the subject of any difference between their two families, nor had he ever criticised the personality of any one she knew. He had only *been himself*. The change in her views had come gradually and unconsciously to her as the happy weeks flew by. Before she knew it she had realized from his talk, from his gestures, even from the way he sat down or got up, or handled his knife and fork, or left the room or entered it, that some of her early teachings had led her astray, and that there might be some-

thing else in life worth having outside of the four cardinal virtues, economy, industry, pluck, and plain-speaking. And if there were, and she was quite certain of it now, would Oliver find them at Brookfield Farm ? This was really the basis of her disquietude, the kernel of the nut which she was trying to crack.

If any of these shortcomings on the part of his entertainers had been apparent to Oliver, or if he had ever drawn any such deductions or noted any such contrasts, judged by the Kennedy Square code, no word of disappointment had passed his lips.

Some things, it is true, during his visit at the farm had deeply impressed him, but they were not those that Margaret feared. He had thought of them that first night when going over the events of the day as they passed in review before him. One personality and one incident had made so profound an impression upon him that he could not get to sleep for an hour thinking about them. It was the stalwart figure of John Grant in his broad-brimmed straw hat and heavy boots striding up the garden path with his scythe over his shoulder. This apparition, try as he might, would not down at his bidding.

"Think of that young fellow," he kept repeating to himself, "the eldest son and heir to

the estate, no doubt, a college-bred man and a most charming gentleman, working like a common laborer in his father's field. And proud of it, too — and would do it again and talk about it. And yet I was so ashamed of working with my hands that I had to run away from home for fear the boys would laugh at me."

Margaret heard the whole story from Oliver's lips the next morning, with many adornments and with any amount of good resolutions for the future. She listened quietly and held his hand the closer, her eyes dancing in triumph, the color mounting to her cheeks; but she made no reply.

Neither did she return the confidence and tell Oliver how she wished her father could see some things in as clear a light, and be more gentle and less opinionated. She was too proud for that.

And so the days, crowded thick with emotions, sped on.

The evening of their first one came and passed, with its half hours when neither spoke a word, and when both trembled all over for the very joy of living; and the morning of the second arrived, bringing with it a happiness she had never known before, and then the morning of the third — and the last day.

They had kept their secret even from John. Oliver wanted to inform her father at once of his attachment, telling her it was not right for him to accept the hospitality of her parents unless they understood the whole situation, but she begged him to wait, and he had yielded to her wishes.

They had all discussed him at their pleasure.

"Nice chap that young Horn," John had said to her the night before. "We had three or four of 'em in my class,— one from Georgia and two from Alabama. They 'd fight in a minute, but they 'd make up just as quick. This one 's the best of the lot." He spoke as if they had all belonged to another race — denizens of Borneo or Madagascar or the islands of the Pacific.

"I have sent my love to his mother, my dear," Mrs. Grant had confided to her early that same morning. "I am sure he has a good mother. He is so kind and polite to me, he never lets me remember that I am deaf when I talk to him," and she looked about her in her simple, patient way.

"Yes, perhaps so," said Silas, sitting hunched up in his chair. "Seems sort of skippy-like to me. Something of a Dandy Jim, I should say. Good enough to make men painters of, I guess."

Artists in those days had few friends, North or South.

None of these criticisms affected Margaret. She did n't care what they thought of him. She knew his heart, and so would they in time.

When Oliver had said all his public good-byes to the rest of the family, — the good-byes with which we have nothing to do had been given and taken in the studio with the curtains drawn, — he joined Margaret at the gate.

They were standing in the road now, under the giant elm, waiting for the stage. She stood close beside him, touching his arm with her own, mournfully counting the minutes before the stage would come, her eyes up the road. All the light and loveliness of the summer, all the joy and gladness of life, would go out of her heart when the door of the lumbering vehicle closed on Oliver.

XVII

LIVE COALS FROM MISS CLENDENNING'S WOOD FIRE

HIS good-byes said, one absorbing thought now filled Oliver's mind, — to reach Kennedy Square on the wings of the wind, and there to pour into the ears of his mother and Miss Lavinia, and of any one else who would listen, the whys and wherefores of his love for Margaret, with such additional description of her personal charms, qualities, and talents as would bring about, in the shortest possible time, the most amicable of relations between Kennedy Square and Brookfield Farm. He was determined that his mother should know her at once. He knew how strong her prejudices were and what her traditions would cause her to think of a woman who led the life that Margaret did, but these things did not deter him. A new love now filled his heart — another and a different kind of love from the one he bore his mother; one that belonged to him; one that was his own and affected his life and soul and career. He was

prepared to fight even harder for this desire of his soul than for his art.

There being no air-ships available for immediate charter, nor big balloons waiting for passengers, with sand-bags ready for instant unloading, nor any underground pneumatic tubes into which he could be pumped and with a puff landed on his own doorstep in Kennedy Square, the impatient lover was obliged to content himself with the back seat of the country stage and a night ride in the train down the valley.

Then came a delay of a week in New York, waiting for the return of Mr. Slade to the city, "whom you must by all means see before coming home," so his mother's letter ran. This delay was made bearable by Waller, Bowdoin, and old Professor Cummings, who went into spasms of delight over the boy's sketches. Waller especially predicted a sure future for him if he would have the grit to throw overboard every other thing he was doing and "stick it out and starve it out" until he pulled through and became famous.

Mr. Slade, while welcoming him with both hands, was not so cheering. The financial and political situations were no better, he said. They had really become more alarming every day. The repudiation of Northern accounts by South-

ern merchants had ceased, — at least some of Morton, Slade & Co.'s customers had redeemed their obligations and had forwarded them their overdue remittances, tiding them over for a time, — but no one could say what was in store for any firm whose business lay largely in the Southern States. He would, however, make his word good. Oliver's situation was still open, and he could again occupy his desk as soon as he returned from Kennedy Square. The length of his service depended entirely on whether the country would go to war or whether its difficulties could be satisfactorily settled in the next Congress.

But none of these things — none of the more depressing ones — dulled for an instant the purpose or chilled the enthusiasm of our young lover. Wars, pestilence, financial panics, and even social tidal waves might overwhelm the land, and yet not one drop of the topmost edge of the flood could wet the tips of his high-stepping toes: Margaret was his; he trod an enchanted realm.

An enthusiasm of equal intensity, but of quite a different kind, had taken possession of the Horn mansion as the hour of Oliver's arrival approached, as any one would have noticed who happened to be inside its hospitable walls. Some-

thing out of the common was about to happen. There was an unusual restlessness in Malachi totally at variance with his grave and dignified demeanor. His perturbation was so great that he even forgot the time-honored custom of wheeling his master's chair into position and the equally time-honored salutation of "Yo' chair 's all ready, Marse Richard." It was noticed, too, that he could not keep out of the hall. Richard had to speak to him twice, and Mrs. Horn had lifted her head in astonishment when that hitherto attentive darky handed her Richard's spectacles instead of her own. Or he would start to enter the dining-room, his hands laden with plates, or the library, his arms filled with logs to replenish the fire, and then stop suddenly and listen with one foot raised, standing like an old dog locating a partridge. So nervous did he become as the twilight deepened, and he began to set the table for supper, that he dropped a cup, smashing it into atoms, a thing that had not happened to him before in twenty years, — one of the blue and gilt, priceless heirlooms in the family, and only used when a distinguished guest was expected. At another time he would have dropped the whole tray with everything upon it, had not Aunt Hannah saved it in time. How she came to be in the pantry with her two

eyes on the front door, when her place was in the kitchen with both of them on the pots and kettles, no one could tell. Everything seemed to be at sixes and sevens in the old house that night.

And the other members of the household, inside the drawing-room, seemed just as restless. Richard, who had raked the coals of his forge, closed the green door of his workshop, and had dressed himself an hour earlier than usual, much to Malachi's delight, became so restless that he got up from his easy-chair half a dozen times and roamed aimlessly about the room, stopping to pick up a book, reading a line and laying it down again. Mrs. Horn dropped so many stitches that she gave up in despair, and said she believed she would not knit.

Malachi heard him first.

"Dat 's him — dat 's Marse Ollie," he cried. "I know dat knock. Here he is, Mistis. Here he is!" He sprang forward, threw wide the door, and had him by the hand before the others could reach him.

"'Fo' Gawd, Marse Ollie, ain't ol' Malachi glad ter git his han's on yer once mo'!"

It was unseemly and absurd how the old man behaved!

And the others were not far behind.

"My boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Horn, as she held him close to her breast. There are few words spoken in times like this.

Richard waited behind her until that imperceptible moment of silence had passed, — the moment a mother gets her arms around the son she loves. Then when the sigh of restful relief that always follows had spent itself, and she had kissed him with his cheek held fast to hers, Oliver loosened his hold and threw his arms about his father's neck, patting him between his shoulder blades as he kissed him.

"Dear old Dad! Oh, but it 's good to get home! And Aunt Hannah, you there?" and he extended his hand while his other arm was still around his father's neck.

"Yas, Marse Ollie, dat 's me; dat 's ol' Hannah," and she stepped closer and grasped his outstretched hand, smoothing it as she spoke. "Lord, Marse Ollie, but ain't you filled out? You is de probable son, sho, honey, come home to yo' people."

But Oliver was not through with Malachi. He must take both of his hands this time and look into his eyes. It was all he could do to keep from hugging him. It would not have been the first time.

"Been well, Mallie?"

Of course he had been; he saw it in his face. It was only to say something to which the old darky could reply to — to keep in touch with him — to know that he was speaking to this same old Malachi whom he had so dearly loved.

"Middlin' po'ly, yas — middlin' po'ly, suh."

Malachi had not the slightest idea what he was talking about. He had not been sick a minute since Oliver left. His heart was too near bursting with pride at his appearance and joy over his return for his mind to work intelligently.

"Dem Yankees ain't sp'iled ye; no, dey ain't. Gor-a-mighty, ain't Malachi glad!" Tears were standing in his eyes now. There was no one but Richard he loved better than Oliver.

No fatted calf was spitted and roasted this night on Aunt Hannah's swinging crane for this "probable son," but there was corn-pone in plenty and a chafing dish of terrapin — Malachi would not let Aunt Hannah touch it; he knew just how much madeira to put in; Hannah always "drowned" it, he would say. And there was sally-lunn and Maryland biscuit; here, at last, Aunt Hannah was supreme — her elbows told the story. And last of all there was a great dish of escalloped oysters cooked in fossil scallop shells thousands of years old, that Malachi

had himself dug out of the marl-banks at Yorktown when he was a boy, and which had been used in the Horn family almost as many times as they were years old. Oh, for a revival of this extinct conchological comfort! But no! It is just as well not to recall even the memories of this toothsome dish. There are no more fossils, neither at Yorktown nor anywhere else, and no substitute in china, tin, or copper will be of the slightest use in giving their flavor.

Supper served and over, with Oliver jumping up half a dozen times to kiss his mother and plumping himself down again to begin on another relay of pone or terrapin or oysters, much to Malachi's delight ("He do eat," he reported to Aunt Hannah, "I tell ye. He 's bearin' very heavy on dem scallops. Dat 's de third shell!") — the doors were opened with a flourish, and the three, preceded by Malachi, entered the drawing-room in time to welcome the neighbors.

Nathan, who was already inside sitting by the fire, his long thin legs stretched out, his bunchy white hair, parted in the middle, falling to his collar's edge, sprang up and shook Oliver's hand heartily. He had charged Malachi, when he admitted him, to keep his presence secret. He wanted them to have Oliver all to themselves.

Miss Clendenning entered a moment later with

both hands held out. She would not stop in the hall to unwind her nubia or take off her little fur boots, but motioned Oliver to her knees after she had kissed him joyously on both cheeks, and held out those two absurd little feet for his ministrations, while Mrs. Horn removed her nubia and cloak.

The rat-a-tat at the door was now constant. Judge Bowman and old Dr. Wallace and four or five of the young men, with the young girls, entered, all with expressions of delight at Oliver's return home, and later, with the air of a lord high mayor, Colonel John Clayton, of Pongateague, with Sue on his arm. Clayton was always a picture when he entered a room. He stood six feet and an inch, his gray hair brushed straight back, his goatee curling like a fish-hook at its end. "Handsome Jack Clayton" was still handsome at sixty.

After the colonel had grasped Oliver's hand in his warmest manner, Sue laid all of her ten fingers in his. It was as good as a play to watch the little witch's face as she stood for a moment and looked Oliver over. She had not written to him for months. She had had half a dozen beaus since his departure, but she claimed him all the same as part of her spoils. His slight mustache seemed to amuse her immensely.

"Are you glad to see me, Ollie?" she asked, looking archly at him from under her lashes.

"Why, Sue!"

Of course he was glad — for a minute — not much longer. How young she is, he thought, how provincial! As she rattled on he noticed the mass of ringlets about her face and the way her head was set on her shoulders. Her neck, he saw, was much shorter than Margaret's, and a little out of drawing. Nor was there anything of that fearless look or toss of the head like a surprised deer, which made Margaret so distinguished. Oliver had arrived at that stage in his affection when he compared all women to one.

All this time Sue was reading his mind. Trust a young girl for that when she is searching a former lover's eyes for what lies behind them. She was evidently nettled at what she found, and had begun by saying "she supposed the Yankee girls had quite captured his heart," when the colonel interrupted her by asking Oliver whether the Northern men really thought they could coerce the South into giving up their most treasured possessions.

He had been nursing his wrath all day over a fresh attack made on the South by some Northern paper, and Oliver was just the person to

vent it upon — not that he did not love the lad, but because he was fresh from the despised district.

"I don't think they want to, sir. They are opposed to slavery, and so are a good many of us. You have a wrong idea of the life at the North, colonel. You have never been North, I believe?"

"No, my dear Oliver, and I never intend to. If ever I go it will be with a musket. They have had it all their own way lately, with their Harriet Stowes, William Lloyd Garrisons, and John Browns; it is our turn now."

"Who do you want to run through the body, Clayton?" asked Richard, joining the group and laying his hands affectionately on the colonel's shoulders.

"Anybody and everybody, Richard, who says we are not free people to do as we please."

"And is anybody really saying so?"

"Yes, you see it every day in every Northern editorial, — another to-day, a most villanous attack, which you must read. These Puritans have been at it for years. This psalm-singing crew have always hated us. Now, while they are preaching meekness and lowliness and the rights of our fellow men, — black ones they mean, — they are getting ready to wad their

guns with their hymn-books. It 's all a piece of their infernal hypocrisy ! "

" But why should they hate us, Clayton ? " asked Richard in a half-humorous tone. He had no spirit of contention in him to-night, not with Oliver beside him.

" Because we Cavaliers are made of different stuff ; that 's why ! All this talk about slavery is nonsense. These Nutmeg fellows approved of slavery as long as they could make a dollar out of the traffic, and then, as soon as they found out that they had given us a commercial club with which to beat out their brains, and that we were really dominating the nation, they raised this hue and cry about the down-trodden negro and American freedom and the Stars and Stripes and a lot of such tomfoolery. Do you know any gentleman who beats his negroes? Do you beat Malachi ? Do I beat my Sam, whom I have brought up from a boy and who would lay down his life any day for me ? I tell you, Richard, it is nothing but a fight for financial and political mastery. They 're afraid of us ; they 've been so for years. They cried ' Wolf ! ' when the fugitive slave law was passed, and they 've kept it up ever since."

" No, I don't believe it," exclaimed Richard, with a positive tone in his voice, " and neither

do you, Clayton. It 's largely a question of sentiment. They don't believe one man should hold another in bondage."

"That 's where you are wrong. They don't care a fippenny bit about the negro. If they ever succeed in their infernal purpose and abolish slavery, and set the negro adrift, mark my words they won't live with him, and they won't let him come North and work alongside of their own people. They 'll throw him back on us after they have made a beggar and a criminal of him. Only a Southerner understands the negro, and only a Southerner can care for him. See what we have done for them! Every slave that landed on our shores we have changed from a savage into a man. They forget this."

Judge Bowman joined in the discussion; so did Dr. Wallace. The judge, in his usual ponderous way, laid down the law, both State and national, — the doctor, who always took the opposite side in any argument, asking him rather pointed questions as to the rights of the government to control the several States as a unit.

Richard held his peace. He felt that this was not the night of all others to discuss politics, and he was at a loss to understand the colonel's want of self-restraint. He could not agree with men like Clayton. He felt that the utterance

of such inflammatory speeches only added fuel to the smouldering flame. If the ugly jets of threatening smoke that were creeping out everywhere because of the friction between the two sections were in danger of bursting into flame, the first duty of a patriot, according to his creed, was to stand by with pails of water, not with kegs of gunpowder. So, while Clayton's outspoken tirade still filled the room, he with his usual tact did all he could to soften the effect of his words. Then again, he did not want Oliver's feelings hurt.

Malachi's entrance with his tray, just as the subject was getting beyond control, put a stop to the discussion. The learned group of disputants, with the other guests, quickly separated into little coteries, the older men taking their seats about an opened card table, on which Malachi had previously deposited several thin glasses and a pair of decanters, the ladies sitting together, and the younger people laughing away in a corner, where Oliver joined them.

Richard and Nathan, now that the danger was averted (they were both natural born peacemakers), stepped across the room to assist in entertaining Miss Clendenning. The little lady had not moved from the chair in which she sat when Oliver relieved her of her fur boots. She

rarely did move when once she had chosen a place for herself in a drawing-room. She was the kind of woman who could sit in one place and still be surrounded, — by half moons of adorers if she sat against the wall, by full moons if she sat in the open. She had learned the art when a girl.

"If Clayton would go among these people, my dear Lavinia," said Richard in a deprecating tone, drawing up a chair and seating himself beside her, "he would find them very different from what he thinks. Some of the most delightful men I have ever met have come from the States north of us. You know that to be so."

"That depends, Richard, on how far North you go," Miss Clendenning answered, spreading her fan as she spoke, looking in between the sticks as if searching for specimens. "In Philadelphia I find some very delightful houses, quite like our own. In New York—well, I rarely go to New York. The journey is a tiresome one and the hotels abominable. They are too busy there to be comfortable, and I do not like noisy, restless people. They give me a headache."

"Oliver has met some charming people, he tells me," said Richard. "Mr. Slade took him into his own home and treated him quite like a son."

"Of course he did; why not?" Miss Clendenning was erect now, her eyes snapping with roguish indignation. "Anybody would be glad to take Oliver into their home, especially when they have two marriageable daughters. Oliver's bow as he enters a room is a passport to any society in the world, my dear Richard. My Lord Chesterfield Clayton has no better manners nor any sweeter smile than our own Lorenzo. Watch Oliver now as he talks to those girls."

Richard had been watching him; he had hardly taken his eyes from him. Every time he looked at him his heart swelled the more with pride.

"And you think, Lavinia, Mr. Slade invited him because of his manners?" He was sure of it. He only wanted her to confirm it.

"Of course. What else?" and she cut her eye at him knowingly. "How many of the other clerks did he invite? Not one. I wanted to find out and I made Ollie write me. They are queer people, these Northerners. They affect to despise good blood and good breeding and good manners. That's all fol-de-rol — they love it. They are eternally talking of equality, equality; one man as good as another. When they say that one man is as *good* as another,

Richard, they mean that *they* are as good, never the other poor fellow."

"Now, my dear Lavinia, stop a moment," laughed the inventor in protest. "You do not mean to say there are really no gentlemen north of us?"

"Plenty of gentlemen, Richard, but few thoroughbreds. There is a distinction, you know."

"Which do you value most?"

"Oh, the thoroughbred! A gentleman might sometime offend you by telling you the truth about yourself or your friends; the thoroughbred, never," and she lifted her hands in mock horror.

"And he could be a rogue and yet his manners would save him?"

"Quite true, dear Richard, quite true. The most charming man I ever met, except your dear self," and she smiled graciously and lowered her voice, as if what she was about to tell was in the strictest confidence, "was a shrivelled-up old prince who once called on my father and myself in Vienna. He was as ugly as a crab, and walked with a limp. There had been some words over a card table, he told me, and the other man fired first. I was a young girl then, but I have never forgotten him to this day. Indeed, my dear Nathan," and she

turned to the old musician and laid her wee hand confidingly on his knee, "but for the fact that the princess was a most estimable woman and still alive, I might have been — well, I really forget what I might have been, for I do not remember his name, but it was something most fascinating in five or six syllables. Now all that man ever did to make that unaccountable impression upon me was just to pick up my handkerchief. Oh, Nathan, it really gives me a little quiver to this day! I never watch Oliver bow but I think of my prince. Now, I have never found that kind of quality, grace, bearing, presence — whatever you may choose to call it — in the Puritan. He has not time to learn it. He despises such subtle courtesies. They smack of the cavalier and the court to him. He is content with a nod of the head and a hurried handshake. So are his neighbors. They would grow suspicious of each other's honesty if they did more. Tut, tut, my dear Richard! My prince's grooms greeted each other in that way."

Richard and Nathan laughed heartily. "And you only find the manners of the antechamber and the throne room South?" asked the inventor.

"Um — not always. It used to be so in

my day and yours, but we are retrograding. It is unpardonable in our case because we have known better. But up there" (and she pointed in the direction of the North Star) "they never did know better; that's some excuse for them."

"Ah, you incorrigible woman, you must not talk so. You have not seen them all. Many of the men who do me the honor to come to my workroom are most delightful persons. Only last week there came one of the most interesting scientists that I have met for"—

"Of course, of course, I have not a doubt of it, my dear Richard, but I am talking of men, my friend, not dried mummies."

Again Richard laughed. One of his greatest pleasures was to draw Miss Clendenning out on topics of this class. He knew she did not believe one half that she said. It was the way she parried his thrusts that delighted him.

"Well, then, take Mr. Winthrop Pierce Lawrence. No more charming gentleman ever entered my house. You were in London at the time, or you would certainly have dined with him here. Mr. Lawrence is not only distinguished as a statesman and a brilliant scholar, but his manners are perfect."

Miss Clendenning turned her head and looked

at Richard under her eyelashes. "Where did you say he was from?"

"Boston."

"Boston?" A rippling, gurgling laugh floated through the room.

"Yes, Boston. Why do you laugh?"

"Bostonians, my dear Richard, have habits and customs, never manners. It is impossible that they should. They are seldom underbred, mind you, — they are always overbred, and, strange to say, without the slightest sense of humor, for they are all brought up on serious isms and solemn fads. The excitement we have gone through over this outrageous book of this Mrs. Stowe's and all this woman movement is but a part of their training. How is it possible for people who believe in such dreadful persons as this Miss Susan Anthony and that Miss — something-or-other — I forget her name — to know what the word 'home' really means and what graces should adorn it? They could never understand my ugly prince, and he? Well, he would be too polite to tell them what he thought of them. No, my dear Richard, they don't know; they never will know, and they never will be any better."

Oliver had crossed the room and had reached her chair.

"Who will never be any better, you dear Midget?" he cried.

"You, you dear boy, because you could not. Come and sit by me where I can get my hand on you. If I had my way you would never be out of reach of my five fingers."

Oliver brought up a stool and sat at her feet.

"Your Aunt Lavinia, Ollie," said Richard, rising to his feet (this relationship was of the same character as that of Uncle Nathan Gill), "seems to think our manners are retrograding."

"Not yours?" protested Oliver, with a laugh, as he turned quickly toward Miss Clendenning.

"No, you sweetheart, nor yours," answered Miss Clendenning, with a sudden burst of affection. "Come, now, you have lived nearly two years among these dreadful Yankees — what do you think of them?"

"What could I think of people who have been so kind to me? Fred Stone has been like a brother, and so has everybody else."

Mrs. Horn had joined the group and sat listening.

"But their manners, my son?" she asked. "Do you see no difference between them and — and — and your father's, for instance?"

and she motioned toward Richard, who was now moving across the room to speak to other guests.

"Dad is himself, and you are yourself, and I am myself," replied Oliver with some positiveness. "When people are kind I never stop to think how they do it."

"Lovely," Miss Clendenning whispered to Nathan. "Spoken like a thoroughbred. Yes, he is *better* than my ugly prince. He would always have remembered how they did it."

"And you see no difference, either, in the ladies?" continued Mrs. Horn, with increasing interest in her tones. "Are the young girls as sweet and engaging?" She had seen Margaret's name rather often in his letters and wondered what impression she had made upon him. Oliver's eyes flashed and the color mounted to his cheeks. Miss Clendenning saw it, and bent forward a little closer to get his answer.

"Well, you see, mother, I do not know a great many, I am so shut up. Miss Grant, whom I wrote you about, is — well, you must see her. She is not the kind of girl that you can describe very well — she really is not the kind of girl that you can describe at all. We have been together all summer, and I stopped at her father's house for a few days when I came down from

the mountains. They live in the most beautiful valley you ever saw."

Miss Clendenning was watching him closely. She caught a look that his mother had missed.

"Is she pretty, Ollie?" asked Miss Lavinia.

"She is better than pretty. You would not say the Milo was pretty, would you? There is too much in her for prettiness."

"And are the others like her?" The little lady was only feeling about, trying to put her finger on the pulse of his heart.

"No, there is nobody like her, — nobody I have ever met."

Miss Clendenning was sure now.

Malachi's second entrance — this time with the great china bowl held above his head — again interrupted the general talk.

Since the memory of man no such apple toddy had ever been brewed!

Even Colonel Clayton, when he tasted it, looked over his glass and nodded approvingly at its creator — a recognition of genius which that happy darky acknowledged by a slight bend of his back, anything else being out of the question by reason of the size of the bowl he was carrying and the presence of his master and of his master's guests.

This deposited on a side table, another bowl

filled with *Olio* — a most surprising and never to be forgotten salad of chicken and celery and any number of other toothsome things — was placed beside it, together with a plate of moonshines and one of Maryland biscuits.

Then came some music, in which Oliver sang and Miss Clendenning played his accompaniments — the old plantation melodies, not the new songs — and next the "wrappings up" in the hall, the host and hostess and the whole party moving out of the drawing-room in a body. Here Nathan, with great gallantry, insisted on getting down on his stiff marrow bones to put on Miss Clendenning's boots, while the young men and Oliver tied on the girls' hoods, amid "good-byes" and "so glads" that he could come home if only for a day, and that he had not forgotten them, Oliver's last words being whispered in Miss Clendenning's ear, informing her that he would come over in the morning and see her about a matter of the greatest importance. And so the door was shut on the last guest.

When the hall was empty Oliver kissed his father good-night, and, slipping his arm around his mother's waist, as he had always done when a boy, the two went slowly upstairs to his little room. He could not wait a minute longer. He

must unburden his heart about Margaret. This was what he had come for. If his mother had only seen her it would be so much easier, he said to himself as he pushed open his bedroom door.

"You are greatly improved, my son," she said, with a tone of pride in her voice. "I see the change already." She had lighted the candle, and the two were seated on the bed, his arm still around her.

"How, mother?"

"Oh, in everything. The boy is gone out of you. You are more reposeful, more self-reliant. I like your modesty, too." She could tell him of his faults, she could also tell him of his virtues.

"And the summer has done you good," she continued. "I felt sure it would. Mr. Slade has been a steadfast friend of yours from the beginning. Tell me now about your new friends. This Miss Grant, is she not the same girl you wrote me about some months ago, the one who drew with you at the art school? Do you like her people?" This thought was uppermost in her mind,—had been, in fact, ever since she first saw Margaret's name in his letters.

"Her mother is lovely, and she has got a brother, a Dartmouth man, who is a fine fellow.

I liked him from the first moment I saw him," Oliver answered simply, wondering how he would begin.

"Is her father living?"

"Yes."

"What kind of a man is he?"

"Well — of course, he is not like our people. He is a — well — he always says just what he thinks, you know. But he is a man of character and position." He was speaking for Margaret now. "They have more family portraits than we have." This was said in a tone that was meant to carry weight.

"And people of education?"

"Oh, I should certainly say so. It is nothing but books all over the house. Really, he has more books than Dad." This statement was to strengthen the one regarding the family ancestors, both telling arguments about Kennedy Square.

"And this girl — is she a lady?"

The question somehow put to flight all his mental manœuvres. "She is more than a lady, mother. She is the dearest" — He stopped, hesitated for an instant, and slipping his arm around his mother's neck drew her close to him. Then, in a torrent of words, his cheeks against hers, the whole story came out. He was a boy

again now, that quality in him that would last all his life. She listened with her eyes on the floor, her heart torn with varying emotions. She was disturbed, but not alarmed. One phase of the situation stood out clearly in her practical mind — his poverty and the impossibility of any immediate marriage. Before that obstacle could be removed she felt sure his natural vacillation regarding women would save him. He would forget her as he had Sue.

"And you say her brother works in the fields, and that her father and mother permitted this girl to leave home and sit night after night with you young men with no other protection than that of a common Irishwoman?" There was a tone of censure now in her voice that roused a slight antagonism in Oliver.

"Why not? What could harm her? There was no other place for her to go where she could learn anything."

Mrs. Horn kept still for a moment, looking on the floor. Oliver sat watching her face.

"And your family, my son," she protested with a certain patient disapproval in her tones. "Do they count for nothing? I, of course, would love anybody you would make your wife, but you have others about you. No man has a right to marry beneath him. Do not be in a

hurry over this matter. Come home for your wife when you are ready to marry. Give yourself time to compare this girl, who seems to have fascinated you, with — Sue, for instance, or any of the others you have been brought up with."

Oliver shrugged his shoulders at the mention of Sue's name. He had compared her.

"You would not talk this way, dearie, if you could see her," he replied in a hopeless way, as if the futility of making his mother understand was now becoming apparent to him. "She is different from any one you ever met, — she is so strong, so fine, such a woman in all that the word means. Not something you fondle and make love to, remember, but a woman more like a Madonna that you worship, or a Greek goddess that you might fear. As to the family part of it, I am getting tired of it all, mother. What good is Grandfather Horn or anybody else to me? I have got to dig my way out just as they did, just as dear old Dad is doing. If he succeeds in his work, who will help him but himself? There have been times when I used to love to remember him sitting by his reading-lamp or with his violin tucked under his chin, and I was proud to think he was my father. Do you know what sets my blood on fire now?

"NO MAN HAS A RIGHT TO MARRY BENEATH HIM!"

It is when I think of him standing over his forge and blowing his bellows, his hands black with coal. I understand many things, dearie, that I knew nothing about when I left home. You used to tell me yourself that everybody had to work, and you sent me away to do it. I looked upon it then as a degradation. I see it differently now. I have worked with all my might all summer, and I have brought back a whole lot of sketches that the boys like. Now I am going to work again with Mr. Slade. I do not like his work, and I do love mine; but I am going to stick to his all the same. I have got something to work for now," and his face brightened. "I am going to win!"

She did not interrupt him. It was better he should unburden his heart. She was satisfied with his record; if he went wrong she only was to blame. But he was not going wrong; nor was there anything to worry about, not even his art, — not so long as he kept his place with Mr. Slade and only took it up as a relaxation from more weighty cares. It was only the girl that caused her a moment's thought.

She saw too, through all his outburst, a certain independence and a fearlessness and a certain fixedness of purpose that sent an exultant thrill through her even when her heart was bur-

dened with the thought of this new danger that threatened him. She had sent him away for the fault of instability, and he had overcome it. Should she not now hold fast, as she had before, and save him the second time from this girl who was beneath him in station and who would drag him down to her level, and so perhaps ruin him?

"We will not talk any more about it to-night, my son," she said in tender tones, leaning forward and kissing him on the cheek — it was through his affections that she controlled him. "You should be tired out with your day's journey and ought to rest. Take my advice — do not ask her to be your wife yet. Think about it a little and see some other women before you make up your mind."

A delicious tremor passed through Oliver. He *had* asked her, and she *had* promised! He remembered just the very day, the hour, the minute. That was the bliss of it all! But this he did not tell his mother. He would not hurt her any further now. Some other day he would tell her; when she could see Madge and judge for herself. No, not to-night, and so with the secret untold he kissed her and led her to her room.

And yet strange to say, it was the one only thing in all his life that he had kept from her.

Ah ! these mothers ! who make lovers of their only sons, dominating their lives ! How bitter must be the hours when they realize that another's arms are opening for them !

And these boys — what misgivings come, what doubts ! How the old walls, impregnable from childhood, begin to crumble ! How little now the dear mother knows, — she so wise but a few moons since ! How this new love steps in front of the old love and claims every part of the boy as its very own !

Faithful to her promise, Miss Clendenning waited the next morning for Oliver in her little boudoir that opened out of the library. A bright fire blazed and crackled, sending its beams dancing over the room and lighting up the red curtains that hung behind her writing-desk, — its top covered with opened letters, her morning's mail ; many bore foreign postmarks, and not a few were emblazoned with rampant crests sunk in little dabs of colored wax. She wore a morning gown of soft white flannel belted in at the waist. Covering her head and wound loosely about her throat was a fluff of transparent silk, half concealing the two nests of little gray and brown knots impaled on hairpins. These were the chrysalides of those gay butterfly side curls

which framed her sweet face at night, and to which she never gave wing until after luncheon, no matter who called. The silk scarf that covered them this morning was in recognition of Oliver's sex.

She had finished her breakfast and was leaning forward in her rocking-chair, her elbows on her knees, her tiny feet resting on the fender. She was watching the fire fairies at work building up their wonderful palaces of molten gold studded with opals and rubies. The little lady must have been in deep thought, for she did not know Oliver had entered until she felt his arm on her shoulder.

"Ah, you dear fellow. No, not there; sit right here on this cricket by my side. Stop, do not say a word. I have been studying it all out in these coals. I know all about it; it is about the mountain girl, this — what do you call her?"

"Miss Grant."

"Nonsense! What do *you* call her?"

"Madge."

"Ah, that 's something like it. And you love her?"

"Yes." (Pianissimo.)

"And she loves you?"

"*Yes.*" (Forte.)

"And you have told her so?"

"YES!" (Fortissimo.)

"Whew!" Miss Clendenning caught her breath and gave a little gasp. "Well, upon my word! You don't seem to have lost any time, my young Romeo. What does her father say?"

"He does n't know anything about it."

"Does anybody except you two babes in the wood?"

"Yes, her mother."

"And yours? You told her last night. I knew you would."

"Not everything; but she is all upset."

"Of course she is. So am I. Now tell me — is she a lady?"

"She is the dearest, sweetest girl you" —

"Come now, come now, answer me. They are all the dearest and sweetest things in the world. What I want to know is, is she a *lady?*"

"Yes."

"True now, Ollie — honest?"

"Yes, in every sense of the word. A woman you would love and be proud of the moment you saw her."

Miss Clendenning took his face in her hands and looked down into his eyes. "I believe you. Now what do you want me to do?"

"I want her to come down here so everybody

can see her. If I had a sister she could invite her, and it would be all right, and maybe then her mother would let her come."

"And you want me to play the sister and have her come here?"

Oliver's fingers closed tight over Miss Clendenning's hand. "Oh, Midget, if you only would, that would fix everything. Mother would understand then why I love her, and Madge could go back and tell her people about us. Her father is very bitter against everybody at the South. They would feel differently if Madge could stay a week with us."

"Why won't her father bring her?"

"He never leaves home. He would not even take her to the mountains, fifteen miles away. She could never paint as she does if she had relied upon him. Mother and Mr. Grant are both alike in their hatred of art as a fitting profession for anybody, and I tell you that they are both wrong."

Miss Clendenning looked up in surprise. She had never seen the boy take a stand of this kind against one of his mother's opinions. Oliver saw the expression on the little lady's face and kept on, his cheeks flushed and a set look about his eyes.

"Yes, wrong. I have never believed mother

could be wrong in anything before, and when she wanted me to give up painting, I did so, because I thought she knew best. But I know she 's not right about Madge, and if she is wrong about her, how do I know she was not wrong about my working with Mr. Crocker ? "

Margaret's words that day in the bark slant were now ringing in his ears. He had never forgotten them, — " Your mother cannot coddle you up forever."

Miss Clendenning held her peace. She was not astonished at the revolt in the boy's mind. She had seen for months past in his letters that Oliver's individuality was asserting itself. It was the new girl whom he was defending, the woman he loved. This had given him strength. She knew something of what he felt, and she knew what blind obedience had done for her. With a half-smothered sigh, she reached over Oliver's head, dipped a quill pen in her inkstand, and at Oliver's dictation wrote Margaret's address.

" I will invite her at once," she said.

Long after Oliver had gone, Miss Clendenning sat looking into the fire. The palaces of rose and amber that the busy fingers of the fire fairies had built up in the white heat of their enthusiasm were in ruins. The light had gone out.

Only gray ashes remained, with here and there a dead cinder.

Miss Clendenning rose from her chair, stood a moment in deep thought, and said aloud, —

"If she loves him, she shall have him. There shall be no more desolate firesides if I can help it."

Early the next morning, she mailed, by the first post, a letter so dainty in form and so delicate in color that only a turtle dove should have carried it to Brookfield Farm, and have dropped it into Margaret's hand. This billet-doux began by inviting Miss Margaret Grant, of Brookfield Farm, to pass a week with Miss Lavinia Clendenning, of Kennedy Square, she, Miss Lavinia, desiring to know the better one who had so charmed and delighted "our dear Oliver," and ended with "Please say to your good mother that I am twice your age, and will take as much care of you as if you were my own daughter. I feel assured she will waive all ceremony when she thinks of how warm a greeting awaits you."

Margaret looked at the postmark, and then at the little oval of violet wax bearing the crest of the Clendennings, — granted in the time of Queen Elizabeth for distinguished services to the

Throne, — and after she had read it to her mother, and had shown the seal to her father, who had put on his glasses, scanned it closely, and tossed it back to her with a dry laugh, and after she had talked it all over with John, who said it was certainly very kind of the woman, and that Oliver's people were evidently "nobs," but of course Madge could n't go, not knowing any of them, Margaret took a sheet of plain white paper from her desk, thanked Miss Clendenning for her kind thought of her, and declined the honor in a firm, round hand. This she closed with a red wafer, and then, with a little bridling of her head and a determined look in her face, she laid the letter on the gate post, ready for the early stage in the morning.

This missive was duly received by Miss Clendenning, and read at once to Mrs. Horn, who raised her eyebrows and pursed her lips in deep thought. After some moments she looked over her glasses at Miss Lavinia and said, —

"I must say, Lavinia, I am very greatly astonished. Won't come? She has done perfectly right. I think all the better of her for it. Really, there may be something in the girl after all. Let me look at her handwriting again — writes like a woman of some force. Won't come? What do you think, Lavinia?"

"Merely a question of grandmothers, my dear; she seems to have had one too," answered the little old maid, with a quizzical smile in her eye, as she folded the letter and slipped it in her pocket.

XVIII

THE LAST HOURS OF A CIVILIZATION

MARGARET'S decision saddened Oliver's last days at home, and he returned to New York with none of his former buoyancy. Here other troubles began to multiply. Before the autumn was gone, Morton, Slade & Co., unable longer to make headway against the financial difficulties that beset them, went to the wall, involving many of their fellow merchants. Oliver lost his situation in consequence, and was forced to support himself during the long, dreary winter by making lithographic drawings for Bianchi, at prices that barely paid his board. His loneliness in the garret room became more intense, Fred being much away and the occupants of the other rooms being either strangers to him or so uncongenial that he would not make their acquaintance.

To his own troubles were added other anxieties. The political outlook had become even more gloomy than the financial. The roar of Sumter's guns had reverberated throughout the

land, and men of all minds were holding their breath and listening, with ears to the ground, for the sound of the next shot. Even Margaret's letters were full of foreboding. "Father is more bitter against the South than ever," she wrote. "He says if he had ten sons each should shoulder a musket. We must wait, Ollie dear. I can only talk to mother about you. Father won't listen, and I never mention your name before him. Not because it is you, Ollie, but because you represent a class whom he hates. Dear John would listen, but he is still in Boston. Even his fellow classmen want to fight, he says. I fear all this will hurt my work, and keep me from painting."

These letters of Margaret's, sad as they were, were his greatest and sometimes his only comfort. She knew his ups and downs, and they must have no secrets from each other. From his mother, however, he kept all records of his privations during these troublous months. Neither his father nor his dear mother must deprive themselves for his benefit.

During these dreary days he often longed for Kennedy Square and for those whom he loved, but it was not until one warm spring day, when the grass was struggling into life, and the twigs on the scraggy trees in Union Square were grow-

ing pink and green with impatient buds and leaves, that he had his wish. Then a startling telegram summoned him. It read as follows: —

Father ill. Come at once.

MOTHER.

Instinctively Oliver felt in his pockets for his purse. There was just money enough to take him to Kennedy Square and back.

His mother met him at the door.

"It was only a fainting turn, my son," were her first words. "I am sorry I sent for you. Your father is himself again, so Dr. Wallace says. He has been working too hard lately — sometimes far into the night. I could have stopped you from coming, but, somehow, I wanted you," and she held him close in her arms, and laid her cheek against his. "I get so lonely, my boy, and feel so helpless sometimes."

The weak and strong were changing places. She felt the man in him now.

Nathan was in the library. He and Malachi had been taking turns at Richard's bedside. Malachi had not closed his eyes all night. Nathan came out into the hall when he heard Oliver's voice, and put his hand on his shoulder.

"We had a great scare, Ollie," he said, "but he 's all right again, thank God! He 's asleep now — better not wake him." Then he put on his coat and went home.

Malachi shook his head. "Sumpin 's de matter wid him, an' dis ain't de las' ob it. Drapped jes like a shote when he 's hit, Marse Oliver," he said in a low whisper, as if afraid of disturbing his master on the floor above. "I was a-layin' out his clo'es, an' he called quick like, 'Malachi! Malachi!' an' when I got dar, he was lyin' on de flo' wid his head on de mat. I ain't nebber seen Marse Richard do like dat befo'." The old servant trembled as he spoke. He evidently did not share Nathan's hopeful views. Neither did Dr. Wallace, although he did not say so to any one.

Their fears, however, were not realized. Richard not only revived, but by the end of the week he was in the drawing-room again, Malachi, in accordance with the time-honored custom, wheeling out his chair, puffing up the cushions, and, with a wave of the hand and a sweeping bow, saying, —

"Yo' ch'ar 's all ready, Marse Richard. Hope you 'se feelin' fine dis evenin', sah!"

The following day he was in his "li'l' room," Oliver helping him. It was the lifting of the

heavy plate of the motor that had hurt Richard, so Nathan told him; not the same motor which Oliver remembered; another, much larger and built on different lines. The inventor now used twenty-four cells instead of ten, and the magnets had been wrapped with finer wire.

These days in the shop were delightful to Oliver. His father no longer treated him as an inexperienced youth, but as his equal. "I hope you will agree with me, my son," he would say; or, "What do you think of the idea of using a 'cam' here instead of a lever?" or, "I wish you would find the last issue of the 'Review,' and tell me what you think of that article of Latrobe's. He puts the case very clearly, it seems to me," etc. And Oliver would bend his head in attention and try to follow his father's lead, wishing all the time that he could really be of use to the man he revered beyond all others, and so lighten some of the burdens that were weighing him down.

And none the less joyful were the hours spent with his mother. All the old-time affection, the devotion of a lover-son, were lavished upon her. And she was so supremely happy in it all. Now that Richard had recovered, there was no other cloud on her horizon, not even that of the dreaded mortgage, which, owing to

some payments made Richard by a company using one of his patents, had been extended and its interest paid for two years in advance, in deference to her urgent request. All anxiety as to the Northern girl had happily passed out of her mind. If Oliver intended marrying Miss Grant he would have told her, she knew. Then, again, he was so much stronger and wiser now, so much more thoughtful than he had been, so much more able to keep his head in matters of this kind!

As his position was different with his father in the "li'l' room" and with his mother in the stillness of her chamber, — for often they talked there together until far into the night, — so were his relations altered with his old friends and neighbors in the drawing-room. While the young men and girls filled the house, as had always been their custom, the older men, as well, now paid their respects to Richard Horn's son.

"One of our own kind," Judge Bowman said to Richard. "Does you credit, Horn — a son to be proud of."

Even Amos Cobb came to look him over, a courtesy which pleased Richard, who greatly admired the Vermonter, and who had not hesitated to express his good opinion of him on

more than one occasion before his own and Cobb's friends.

"A man of force, gentlemen," Richard had said, "of great kindness of heart and with a wide range of vision. One who has the clearest ideas of what makes for the good of his country; a man, too, not ashamed of his opinions and with ample courage to defend them. He deserves our unqualified respect, not our criticism."

When Cobb heard of Richard's outspoken defence of him he at once called on the inventor at his workshop, a thing he had not done for months, and asked to see the motor, and that same night astonished the circles about the club tables by remarking, in a tone of voice loud enough for everybody to hear, "We have all been wrong about Horn. He has got hold of something that will one day knock steam higher than Gilderoy's kite." A friendship was thus established between the two which had become closer every day, the friendship of a clearer understanding; one which was unbroken during the rest of their lives.

It was quite natural, therefore, that Amos Cobb should be among Oliver's earliest callers. He must have been pleased with his inspection, for he took occasion at the club to say to Colonel Clayton, in his quick, crisp way, —

"Dropped in at Horn's last night. His boy's over from New York. Looks like a different man since he quit fooling round here a couple of years ago. Clean cut a young fellow as I 've seen for many a day. Got a look out of his eyes like his mother's. Level-headed woman, his mother — no better anywhere. If all the young bloods South had Oliver Horn's ideas, we might pull through this crisis."

To which my Lord Chesterfield of Kennedy Square merely replied only with a nod of the head and a drawing together of the eyebrows. He found it difficult to tolerate the Vermonter in these days, — with his continued tirades against "the epidemic of insanity sweeping over the South," as Cobb would invariably put it.

The scribe now reaches a night in Oliver's career fraught with such momentous consequences that he would be glad to leave its story untold.

An unforgettable night, indeed, both for those who were assembled there, and for him who is the chronicler. He would fain lay down his pen to recall again the charm and the sweetness and the old-time flavor of that drawing-room: the soft lights of the candles; the perfume of the lilacs coming in through the half-open windows;

the merry laugh of the joyous girl running through the Square to be ushered by Malachi a moment later into the presence of her hostess, there to make her courtesied obeisance before she joined a group of young people around one of the red damask-covered sofas. And then Richard, dear Richard, with his white hair and his gracious speech, and Miss Clendenning with her manners of foreign courts, and the sweet-voiced hostess of the mansion moving about among her guests; her guests who were her neighbors and her friends; whose children were like her own, and whose joys and sorrows were hers — guests, neighbors, friends many of whom after this fatal night were to be as enemies, never to assemble again with the old-time harmony and love.

Malachi had brewed the punch; the little squat glasses were set out beside the Canton china bowl, for it was the night of the weekly musical, and an unusually brilliant company had assembled in honor of Oliver's arrival and of Richard's recovery.

The inventor was to play his own interpretations of Handel's Largo, a favorite selection of Ole Bull, and one which the inventor and the great virtuoso had played together some years before.

Miss Clendenning had taken her place at the piano, Nathan standing beside her to turn the leaves of the accompaniment.

Richard had picked up his violin, tucked it under his chin, poised the bow, and that peculiar hush which always precedes the sounding of the first notes on evenings of this kind had already fallen upon the room, when there came a loud rap at the front door that startled every one, and the next instant Colonel Clayton burst in, his cheeks flaming, his hat still on his head.

"Ten thousand Yankees will be here in the morning, Horn!" he gasped, out of breath with his run across the Square, holding one hand to his side as he spoke, and waving an open telegram in the other. "Stop! This is no time for fiddling. They 're not going round by water; they 're coming here by train. Read that," and he held out the bit of paper.

The colonel's sudden entrance and the startling character of the news had brought every man to his feet.

Richard laid down his violin, read the telegram quietly, and handed it back.

"Well, suppose they do come, Clayton?"

His voice was so sustained, and his manner so temperate, that a certain calming reassurance was felt.

"Suppose they *do* come! They 'll burn the town, I tell you!" shouted the infuriated man, suddenly remembering his hat and handing it to Malachi. "That 's what they 're coming for. We want no troops in our streets, and the government ought to know it. It 's an outrage to send armed men here at this time!"

"You 're all wrong, Clayton," answered Richard, without raising his voice. "You have always been wrong about this matter. There are two sides to this question. Virginia troops occupied Harper's Ferry yesterday. If the authorities consider that more troops are needed to protect Washington, that 's their affair, not yours nor mine."

"We 'll *make* it our affair. What right has this damnable government to march their troops through a free and sovereign State without its permission? Whom do they think this town belongs to, I want to know, that this Northern scum should foul it. Not a man shall set foot here if I can help it. I would rather" —

Richard turned to stay the torrent of invectives, in which such words as "renegades," "traitors," "mud-sills," were heard, but the colonel, completely unmanned by the rage he was in, and seemingly unconscious of the presence of the ladies, waved him aside with his

hand, and faced the row of frightened, expectant faces.

"Gentlemen, when you are through with this tomfoolery, I shall be glad if you will come to the club; any of you who have got guns had better look them up; they 'll be wanted before this is over. We 'll meet these dirty skinflints with cold lead and plenty of it."

Oliver's face flushed at the colonel's words, and he was about to speak, when his mother laid her hand on his arm. Visions of the kindly face of Professor Cummings, and the strong, well-knit figure of Fred Stone, John Grant, Hank, Jonathan Gordon, and the others whom he loved came before his eyes.

Richard raised his hand in protest.

"You are mad, Clayton; you don't know what you are doing! Stop these troops and our streets will run blood. I beg and beseech you to keep cool. Because South Carolina has lost her head, that is no reason why we should. This is not our fight! If my State called me to defend her against foreign invasion, old as I am I would be ready, and so should you. But the government is part of ourselves, and should not be looked upon as an enemy. You are wrong, I tell you, Clayton."

"Wrong or right, they 'll have to walk over

my dead body if they attempt to cross the streets of this town. That 's my right as a citizen, and that I shall maintain. Gentlemen, I have called a meeting at the club at ten o'clock to-night. All of you able to carry a gun will do me the kindness to be present. I 'd rather die right here in my tracks than let a lot of low-lived mud-sills who never entered a gentleman's house in their lives come down here at the beck and call of this rail-splitter they 've put in the White House and walk over us rough shod ! And you, Horn, a Virginian, defend it ! By God, sir, it 's enough to make a man's blood boil ! "

The inventor's eyes flashed. They blazed now as brightly as those of Clayton. Not even a life-long friend had the right to use such language in his presence, or in that of his guests. Richard's figure grew tense with indignation. Confronting the now reckless man, he raised his hand, and was about to order him out of the house, when Oliver stepped quickly in front of his father.

" You are unjust, Colonel Clayton." The words came slowly between the boy's partly closed teeth. " You know nothing of these people. I have lived among them long enough not only to know but to love them. There are as many gentlemen North as South. If you would

go among them as I have done, you would be man enough to admit it."

The colonel turned upon him with a snarl.

"And so you have become a dirty renegade, have you, and gone back on your blood and your State? That 's what comes of sending boys like you away from home!"

The guests stood amazed. The spectacle of the most courteous man of his time acting like a blackguard was more astounding than the news he had brought. Even Malachi, at the open door, trembled with fear.

As the words fell from his lips, Mrs. Horn's firm, clear voice, crying "Shame! Shame!" rang through the room. She had risen from her seat and was walking rapidly to where the colonel was standing.

"Shame, I say, John Clayton! How dare you speak so? What has our young son ever done to you, that you should insult him in his father's house? What madness has come over you?"

The horrified guests looked from one to the other. Every eye was fixed on the colonel, shaking with rage.

For a brief instant he faced his hostess, started to speak, checked himself as if some better judgment prevailed, and with upraised hands flung himself from the room, shouting, as he went, —

"Ten o'clock, gentlemen! Chesapeake Club! Every man with a gun!"

Richard, astounded at Clayton's action, and now thoroughly convinced of the danger of the situation and determined to do what he could to thwart the efforts of such men as the colonel and his following, laid his violin in its case, turned to his frightened guests, and with a few calming words and a promise to send each one of them word if any immediate danger existed, called Oliver and Nathan to him, and taking his cloak and hat from Malachi's outstretched trembling hands, started for the club. Once outside, it was easy to see that a feeling of intense and ominous excitement was in the air. Even on the sidewalk and on the street corners, men stood silent, huddled together, their eyes on the ground, the situation being too grave for spoken words.

On arriving they found its halls already filled with angry and excited men discussing the threatened invasion, many of whom met the young man with scowling looks, the colonel having evidently informed them of Oliver's protest.

A few of the members had brought their sporting guns. These had been handed to the gouty old porter, who, half frightened out of his wits,

had stacked them in a row against the wall of the outer hall. Billy Talbot arrived a few moments later, carrying a heavy fowling-piece loaded for swan. He had been dining out when summoned, and had hurriedly left the table, excusing himself on the ground that he had been "called to arms." He had taken time, however, to stop at his own house, slip out of his English dress suit and into a brown ducking outfit.

"We 'll shoot 'em on the run, damn 'em, — like rabbits, sir," he said to Cobb as he entered, the Vermonter being the only man likely to communicate with the invaders and so make known the warlike intentions of at least one citizen, and the utter hopelessness of any prolonged resistance. Waggles, who had followed close on his master's heels, was too excited to sit down, but stood on three legs, his eye turned toward Talbot, as if wanting to pick up any game which Billy's trusty fowling-piece might bring down.

A quiet, repressed smile passed over Oliver's face as he watched Waggles and his master, but he spoke no word to the Nimrod. He could not help thinking how Hank Pollard would handle the fashion-plate if he ever closed his great bony hands upon him.

Judge Bowman now joined the group, bow-

ing to Richard rather coldly and planting himself squarely in front of Oliver.

"There 's only one side to this question, young man, for you," he said. "Don't be fooled by those fellows up in New York. I know them — known them for years. Look up there," and he pointed to the portrait of Oliver's ancestor above the mantel. "What do you think he would do if he were alive to-day? Stick to your own, my boy — stick to your own!"

General McTavish now hurried in, drawing off his white gloves as he entered the room, followed by Tom Gunning, Carter Thom, and Mowbray, an up-country man. The four had been dining together, and had also left the table on receipt of the colonel's message. They evidently appreciated the gravity of the situation, for they stood just outside the excited group that filled the centre of the large room, listening eagerly to Richard's clear tones pleading for moderation "in a crisis which," he urged, "required the greatest public restraint and self-control," and which would surely "plunge the State into the most horrible of wars" if those about him listened to the counsels of such men as Clayton and Judge Bowman.

During the whole discussion Amos Cobb stood silent, leaning against the mantelpiece, his cold

gray eyes fixed on the excited throng, his thin lips curling now and then. When the Defence Committee, in spite of Richard's protest, had at last been formed, and its members formally instructed to meet the enemy outside the city and protest, first by voice and then, if necessary, by arms, against the unwarrantable invasion of the soil of their State, the Vermonter buttoned up his coat slowly, one button after another, fastened each one with a determined gesture, drew on his gloves, set his lips tight, singled out Oliver and Richard, shook their hands with the greatest warmth, and walked straight out of the clubhouse. Some time during the night he drove in a hack to Mr. Stiger's house; roused the old cashier from his sleep; took him and the big walled-town key down to the bank; unlocked the vault and dragged from it two wooden boxes filled with gold coin, his own property, and which the month before he had deposited there for safe keeping. These, with Stiger's assistance, he carried to the hack. Within the hour, the two boxes with their contents were locked up in a bureau drawer in his own house, awaiting their immediate shipment to New York.

The next morning Malachi's wizened face

was thrust inside Oliver's bedroom door. He was shaking with terror, his eyes almost starting from his head.

"Marse Ollie, Marse Ollie, git up quick as you kin! De Yankees is come; de town is black wid 'em!"

Oliver sprang from his bed and stood half dazed, looking into Malachi's eyes.

"How do you know? Who told you?"

"I done seen 'em. Been up since daylight. Dey got guns wid 'em. 'Fo' Gawd, dis is turble!" The old man's voice trembled; he could hardly articulate.

Oliver hurried into his clothes, stepped noiselessly downstairs so as not to wake his father and mother, and, closing the front door softly behind him, stood for a moment on the top step. Should he forget the insults of the night before and go straight to Colonel Clayton, and try to dissuade him from his purpose, or should he find the regiment and warn them of their danger?

A vague sense of personal responsibility for whatever the day might bring forth took possession of him, as though the turning point in his life had come, without his altogether realizing it. These men from the North were coming to his own town, where he had been born and brought up, and where they should be hos-

pitably received. If Clayton had his way they would be met with clenched hands and perhaps with blows. That these invaders were armed, and that each man carried forty rounds of ammunition and was perfectly able to take care of himself, did not impress him. He only remembered that they were of the same blood as the men who had befriended him, and that they were in great personal danger.

The angry shouts of a crowd of men and boys approaching the Square from a side street now attracted his attention. They rushed past Oliver without noticing him, and, hurrying on through the gate, crossed the park, in the direction of the railroad station and the docks. One of the mob, lacking a club, stopped long enough to wrench a paling from the rickety fence inclosing the Square, trampling the pretty crocuses and the yellow tulips under foot. Each new arrival, seeing the gap, followed the first man's example, throwing the branches and tendrils to the ground as they worked, until the whole panel was wrecked and the vines were torn from their roots. As they swept by the Clayton house, half a dozen men, led by the colonel, ran down the steps and joined the throng.

Oliver, seeing now that all his efforts for

peace would be hopeless, ran through the Square close behind the shouting mob, dashed down a side street parallel to that through which the cars carrying the troops were to pass on their way to Washington, turned into an alley, and found himself on the water front, opposite one of the dock slips.

These slips were crowded with vessels, their bowsprits, like huge bayonets, thrust out over the car tracks, as if to protect the cellars of the opposite warehouses, used by the ship chandlers for the storage of coarse merchandise, and always left open during the day. The narrow strip of dock front, between the car tracks and the water-line, — an unpaved strip of foot-trodden earth and rotting planks, on which lay enormous ship anchors, anchor chains in coils, piles of squared timber, and other maritime properties, stored here for years, — was now a seething mass of people, completely hiding the things on which they stood.

Oliver mounted a pile of barrels in front of one of these ship-chandler cellars, and, holding to an awning post, looked off over the heads of the surging crowd and in the direction of the railroad station at the end of the long street. From his position on the top barrel he could see the white steam of the locomotives rising

above the buildings and the line of cars. He could see, too, a yard engine backing and puffing, as if making up a train.

Suddenly, without apparent cause, there rose above the murmurs of the street an ominous sound, like that of a fierce wind soughing through a forest of pines. All eyes were directed down the long street upon a line of cars that had been shunted on the street track; about these moved a group of men in blue uniforms, the sun flashing on their bayonets and the brass shields of their belts.

Oliver, stirred by the sound, climbed to the top of the awning post for a better view and clung to the crosspiece. Every man who could gain an inch of vantage, roused to an extra effort by the distinct roar, took equal advantage of his fellows. Sailors sprang farther into the rigging or crawled out to the end of the bowsprits; the windows of the warehouses were thrown up, the clerks and employees standing on the sills, balancing themselves by the shutters; even the skylights were burst open, men and boys, crawling out, edging their way along the ridgepoles of the roofs or holding to the chimneys. Every inch of standing room was black with spectators.

The distant roar died away in fitful gusts as

suddenly as it had arisen, and a silence even more terrifying fell upon the throng as a body of police poured out of a side street and marched in a compact body toward the cars.

Then came long strings of horses, eight or ten in tandem. These were backed down and hooked to the cars.

The flash of bayonets was now cut off as the troops crowded into the cars; the body of police wheeled and took their places ahead of the horses; the tandems straightened out, and the leaders lunged forward under the lash. The advance through the town had begun.

All this time the mob about Oliver stood with hands clenched, jaws tight shut, great lumps in their throats. Their eyes were the eyes of hungry beasts watching an approaching prey.

As the distant rumbling of the cars, drawn by teams of straining horses, sounded the nearer, a bareheaded man, with white hair and mustache, and black garments that distinguished him from the mob about him, and whom Oliver instantly recognized as Colonel Clayton, mounted a mass of squared timber lining the track, ran the length of the pile, climbed to the topmost stick, and shouted, in a voice which reverberated throughout the street, —

"Block the tracks!"

A torrent of oaths broke loose as the words left his lips, and a rush was made for the pile of timber. Men struggled and fought like demons for the ends of the great sticks, carrying them by main strength, crossing them over the rails, heaping them one on the other like a pile of huge jack-straws, a dozen men to a length, — the mobs on the housetops and in the windows cheering like mad. The ends of the heavy chains resting on the strip of dirt were now caught up and hauled along the cobbles to be intertwined with the squared timber ; anchors weighing tons were pried up and dragged across the tracks by lines of men urged on by gray-haired old merchants in Quaker-cut dress coats, many of them bareheaded, who had yielded to the sudden, unaccountable delirium that had seized upon every one. Colonel Clayton, Carter Thom, and Mowbray could be seen working side by side with stevedores from the docks and the rabble from the shipyards. John Camblin, a millionaire and nearly eighty years of age, head of the largest East India house on the wharves, his hat and wig gone, his coat split from the collar to the tails, was tugging at an anchor ten men could not have moved. Staid citizens, men who had not used an oath for years, stood on the sidewalks swearing like street toughs ;

others looked out from their office windows, the tears streaming down their cheeks. A woman with a coarse shawl about her shoulders, her hair hanging loose, a broom in one hand, was haranguing the mob from the top of a tobacco hogshead, her curses filling the air.

Oliver held to his seat on the crosspiece of the awning, his teeth set, his eye fixed on the rapidly advancing cars, his mind wavering between two opinions, — loyalty to his home, now invaded by troops whose bayonets might be turned upon his own people, and loyalty to the friends he loved, and to the woman who loved him!

The shouting now became a continuous roar. The front line of policemen, as they neared the obstructions, swung their clubs right and left, beating back the crowd. Then the rumbling cars, drawn by the horses, came to a halt. The barricades must be reckoned with.

Again there came the flashing of steel and the intermingling of blue and white uniforms. The troops were leaving the cars and were forming in line to pass the barricades; the officers marching in front, the compact mass following elbow to elbow, their eyes straight before them, their muskets flat against their shoulders.

The approaching column now deployed

sharply, wheeled to the right of the obstruction, and became once more a solid mass, leaving the barricades behind them, the chief of police at the head of the line forcing the mob back to the curbstone, laying about him with his club, thumping heads and cracking wrists as he cleared the way.

The colonel of the regiment, his fatigue cap pulled over his eyes, sword in hand, shoulders erect, cape thrown back, was now abreast of the awning to which Oliver clung. Now and then he would glance furtively at the housetops, as if expecting a missile.

The mob looked on sullenly, awed into submission by the gleaming bayonets. But for the shouts of the police, beating back the crowd, and the muttered curses, one would have thought a parade was in progress.

The first company had now passed, — pale, haggard-looking men, their lips twitching, showing little flecks of dried saliva caked in the corners of their mouths, their hands tight about the butts of their muskets.

Oliver looked on with beating heart. The dull, monotonous tramp of their feet strangely affected him.

As the second line of bayonets came abreast of the awning post, a blacksmith in a red shirt

and leather apron, his arms bared to the elbow, sprang from the packed sidewalk into the open space between the troops and the gutter, lifted a paving stone high above his head, and hurled it, with all his might, straight against the soldier nearest him. The man reeled, clutched at the comrade next him, and sank to the ground. Then, quick as an echo, a puff of white smoke burst out down the line of troops, and a sharp, ringing report split the air. The first shot of defence had been fired.

The whole column swayed as if breasting a gale.

Another and an answering shot now rang through the street. This came from a window filled with men gesticulating wildly. Instantly the troops wheeled, raised their muskets, and a line of fire and smoke belched forth.

A terrible fear, that paled men's faces, followed by a moment of ominous silence, seized upon the mob, and then a wild roar burst out from thousands of human throats. The rectangular body of soldiers and the ragged-edged mob merged into a common mass. Men wrenched the guns from the soldiers and beat them down with the butt ends of the muskets. Frenzied policemen hurled themselves into the midst of the disorganized militia, knocking up the ends of their

muskets, begging the men to hold their fire. The air was thick with missiles: bricks from the housetops, sticks of wood and coal from the fireplaces of the offices, iron bolts, castings, — anything the crazed mob could find with which to kill their fellow men. The roar was deafening, drowning the orders of the officers.

Oliver clung to his post, not knowing whether to drop into the seething mass or to run the risk of being shot where he was. Suddenly his eye singled out a soldier who stood at bay below him, swinging his musket, widening the circle about him with every blow. The soldier's movements were hampered by his heavy overcoat and army blanket slung across his shoulder. His face and neck were covered with blood and dirt, disfiguring him beyond recognition.

At the same instant Oliver became conscious that a man in blue overalls was creeping up on the soldier's rear to brain him with a cart-rung that he held in his hand.

A mist swam before the boy's eyes, and a great lump rose in his throat. The cowardice of the attack incensed him; some of the hot blood of the old ancestor that had crossed the flood at Trenton flamed up in his face. With the quickness of a cat he dropped to the sidewalk, darted

forward, struck the coward full in the face with his clenched fist, tumbling him to the ground, wrenched the rung from his hands, and, jumping in front of the now almost overpowered soldier, swung the heavy stick about him like a flail, clearing the space before him.

The assaulting crowd wavered, fell back, and then, maddened at Oliver's defence of the invader, with a wild yell of triumph swept the two young men off their feet, throwing them bodily down the steps of a ship-chandler's shop, the soldier knocked senseless by a blow from a brick which had struck him full in the chest.

Oliver lay still for a moment, raised his head cautiously, and putting forth all his strength, twisted his arms around the stricken man and rolled with him into the cellar. Then, springing to his feet, he slammed the door behind them and slipped in the bolt before the mob could guess his meaning.

Listening at the crack of the door for a moment, and finding they were not pursued, he stooped over the limp body, lifted it in his arms, laid it on a pile of sails, and ran to the rear of the cellar for a bucket standing under a grimy window, scarcely visible in the gloom, now that the door was shut.

Under the touch of the cold water the soldier slowly opened his eyes, straining them toward Oliver, as if in pain.

The two men looked intently at each other, the soldier passing his hand across his forehead as if trying to clear his brain. Then lifting himself up on his elbow, he gasped, —

"Horn! Horn! My God!"

Oliver's heart stopped beating.

"Who are you?"

"John Grant."

Oliver saw only Margaret's face!

As though he were working for the woman he loved, — doing what she would have done, — he knelt beside the wounded man, wiped the blood and grime from his cheeks with his own handkerchief, loosening his coat, rubbing his hands, murmuring "Old fellow," "Dear John:" there was no time for other interchange of speech.

When at last Grant was on his feet the two men barricaded the doors more strongly, rolling heavy barrels against them, the sounds from the street seeming to indicate that an attack might be made upon them. But the mob had swept on and forgotten them, as mobs often do, while the fugitives waited, hardly daring to speak except in detached whispers, lest some

one of the inmates of the warehouse overhead might hear them.

Toward noon a low tap was heard at the window, which was level with an alley in the rear, and a man's hand was thrust through a broken pane. Oliver pressed Grant's arm, laid his finger on his lips, caught up a heavy hammer lying on an oil barrel, crept noiselessly along the wall toward the sound, and stopped to listen. Then he heard his name called in a hoarse whisper.

"Marse Ollie! Marse Ollie! Is you in here?"

"Who is it?" Oliver called back, crouching beneath the window, his fingers tight around the handle of the hammer.

"It's me, Marse Ollie."

"You, Malachi?"

"Yas, sir, I'se been a-followin' ye all de mawnin'; I see 'em tryin' to kill ye an' I tried to git to ye. I kin git through — yer need n't help me," and he squeezed himself under the raised sash. "Malachi like de snake — crawl through anywheres. An' ye ain't hurted?" he asked when he was inside. "De bressed Lord, ain't dat good! I been a-waitin' outside; I was feared dey 'd see me if I tried de door."

"Where are the soldiers?"

"Gone. Ain't nobody outside at all. Mos' to de railroad by dis time, dey tells me. An' dere ain't nary soul 'bout dis place. All run away. Come 'long wid me, son. I ain't gwine ter leabe ye a minute. Marse Richard 'll be waitin'. Come 'long home, son. I been a-followin' ye all de mawnin'." The tears were in his eyes now. "An' ye ain't hurted," and he felt him all over with trembling hands.

John raised himself above the oil barrels. He had heard the strange talk and was anxiously watching the approaching figures.

"It 's all right, Grant. It 's our Malachi," Oliver called out in his natural voice, now that there was no danger of being overheard.

The old man stopped and lifted both hands above his head.

"Gor' a-mighty! an' he ain't dead?" His eyes had now become accustomed to the gloom.

"No; and just think, Mally, he is my own friend. Grant, this is our Malachi whom I told you about."

Grant stepped over the barrel and held out his hand to the old negro. There are no class distinctions where life and death are concerned.

"Glad to see you. Pretty close shave, but I guess I 'm all right. They 'd have done for me but for your master."

A council of war was now held. The uniform would be fatal if Grant were seen in it on the street. Malachi must crawl into the alley again, go over to Oliver's house, and return at dusk with one of Oliver's suits of clothes; the uniform and the blood-stained shirt could then be hidden in the cellar, and at dark, should the street still be deserted, the three would put on a bold front and walk out of the front door of the main warehouse over their heads. Once safe in the Horn house, they could perfect plans for Grant's rejoining his regiment.

Their immediate safety provided for, and Malachi gone, Oliver could wait no longer to ask about Margaret. He had been turning over in his mind how he had best broach the subject, when her brother solved the difficulty by saying, —

"Father was the first man in Brookfield to indorse the President's call for troops. He 'd have come himself, old as he is, if I had not joined the regiment. He did n't like you, Horn; I always told him he was wrong. He 'll never forgive himself now when he hears what you have done for me," and he laid his hand affectionately on Oliver's shoulder as he spoke. "I liked you as soon as I saw you, and so did mother, and so does Madge, but father was always

wrong about you. We told him so, again and again, and Madge said that father would see some day that you got your politeness from the Cavaliers and we got our plain speaking from the Puritans. The old gentleman was pretty mad about her saying so, I tell you, but she stuck to it. Madge is a dear girl, Horn. A fellow always knows just where to find Madge; no nonsense about her. She 's grown handsome, too, handsomer than ever. There 's a new look in her face, somehow, lately. I tell her she 's met somebody in New York she likes, but she won't acknowledge it."

Oliver drank in every word, drawing out the brother with skilful questions and little exclamatory remarks that filled Grant with enthusiasm and induced him to talk on. They were young men again now, — brothers once more, as they had been that first afternoon in the library at Brookfield. In the joy of hearing from her he entirely forgot his surroundings and the dangers that still beset them both; a joy intensified because it was the first and only time he had heard some one who knew her talk to him of the woman he loved. This went on until night fell, and Malachi again crawled in through the same low window and helped John into Oliver's clothes.

When all was ready the main door of the warehouse above was opened carefully and the three men walked out — Malachi ahead, John and Oliver following. The moonlit street was deserted; only the barricades of timber and the litter of stones and bricks marked the events of the morning. Dodging into a side alley and keeping on its shadow side, they made their way toward Oliver's home.

When the three reached the Square, the white light of the moon lay full on the bleached columns of the Clayton house. Outside on the porch, resting against the wall, stood a row of long-barrelled guns glinting in the moon's rays. Through the open doorway could be seen the glow of the hall lantern, the hall itself crowded with men. The Horn house was dark, except for a light in Mrs. Horn's bedroom. The old servant's visit had calmed their fears, and they had only to wait now until Oliver's return.

Malachi stationed Oliver and John Grant in the shadow of the big sycamore that overhung the house, mounted the marble steps, and knocked twice. Aunt Hannah opened the door. She seemed to be expecting some one, for the knock was instantly followed by the turning of the knob.

Malachi spoke a few words in an undertone to

Hannah, and stepped back to where the two young men were standing.

"You go in, Marse Oliver. Leabe de gemman here wid me under de tree. Everybody 's got dere eye wide open now — can't fool Malachi — I knows de signs."

Oliver walked leisurely to the door, closed it softly behind him, and ran upstairs into his mother's arms.

Malachi whispered to Grant, and the two disappeared in the shadows. At the same moment a bolt shot back in a gate in the rear of the yard, — a gate rarely unbolted. Old Hannah stood behind it, shading a candle with her hand. Malachi led the way across the yard, through the green door of Richard's shop, mounted the work bench, felt carefully along the edge of a trap-door in the ceiling, unhooked a latch, pushed it up with his two hands, the dust sifting down in showers on his head, and disclosed a large empty loft, once used by the slaves as a sleeping-room, and which had not been opened for years.

Assisted by the negro's arms, Grant climbed to the floor above, where a dim skylight gave him light and air. A cup of hot coffee was then handed up, and the door of the trap carefully fastened, Malachi rumpling the shavings on the

work bench to conceal the dust. No trace of the hiding-place of the fugitive was visible.

When Malachi again reached the front hall, it was in response to some one who was hammering at the door as if to break it down. The old man peered cautiously out through the small panes of glass.

The sidewalk was crowded with men, led by Colonel Clayton, most of them carrying guns. They had marched over from Clayton's house. Among them was a *posse* of detectives from the police department.

In answer to their summons Richard had thrown up the window of his bedroom and was talking to Clayton, whose voice Malachi recognized above the murmurs and threats of the small mob.

"Come down, Horn. Oliver has proved traitor, just as I knew he would. He 's been hiding one of these damned Yankees all day. We want that man, I tell you, dead or alive, and we are going to have him."

When the door was flung wide Clayton confronted, not Richard, but Oliver.

"Where 's that Yankee?" cried Clayton. He had not expected to see Oliver. "We are in no mood for nonsense. Where have you hidden him?"

Malachi stepped forward before Oliver could answer.

"Marse Oliver ain't hid him. If you want him go hunt him!"

"You speak like that to me, you black scoundrel!" burst out the colonel, and he raised his arm as if to strike him.

"Yes — me! Ain't nobody gwine ter tech Marse Oliver while I lib. I 's as free as you is, Marse Clayton. Ain't no man can lay a han' on me!"

The colonel wheeled angrily and gave an order to one of the detectives in a low voice. Oliver stood irresolute. He knew nothing of Grant's whereabouts.

The detective moved from the colonel's side, and pushed his way closer to where Oliver stood.

"There 's no use your denying it, young feller; we 've heard the whole story from one of our men who saw you jump in front of him. You bring him out, or we 'll go through the place from cellar to garret."

Oliver gazed straight at the speaker and still held his peace. He was wondering where Grant had hidden himself, and what John's chances were if the crowd searched the house. Malachi's outburst had left him in the dark.

Mrs. Horn and Richard, who had followed Oliver and were standing halfway down the stairs, looked on in astonishment. Would Clayton dare to break all the rules of good manners, and search the house, she whispered to Richard.

Another of the detectives now stepped forward,— a dark, ugly-looking man, with the face of a bulldog.

"Look here! I'll settle this. You and two men crossed the Square ten minutes ago. This nigger is one of 'em; where 's the other?"

Malachi turned and smiled significantly at Oliver, — a smile he knew. It was the smile which the old man's face always wore whenever some tortuous lie of the darky's own concoction had helped his young master out of one of his scrapes.

"I am not here to answer your questions," Oliver replied quietly, a feeling of relief in his heart.

The officer turned quickly, and said with an oath to one of the detectives, "Send one man to the alley in the rear, and place another at this door. I'll search the yard and the house. Let no one of the family leave this hall. If that nigger moves put the irons on him."

The men outside made a circle about the house, some of them moving up the alley to

watch the rear. Clayton leaned against the jamb of the door. He addressed no word to Richard or Mrs. Horn, nor did he look their way. Oliver stood with folded arms under the eight-sided hall lantern, which an officer had lighted. Now and then he spoke in restrained tones to his mother, who had taken her seat on the stairs, Richard standing beside her. It was not the fate of the soldier that interested her; it was the horror of the search. Richard had not spoken except to direct Malachi to obey the officer's orders. The horror of the search did not affect the inventor; that only violated the sanctity of the home: it was the brute force behind it which appalled him — that might annihilate the Republic.

"It is the beginning of the end," he said to himself.

The tread of heavy feet was again heard coming through the hall. Malachi turned quickly, and a subdued smile lighted his wrinkled face.

The two detectives were alone!

"He is not there, Colonel Clayton," said the man with the bulldog face, slipping his pistol into his hip pocket. "We went through the yard and the outhouses like a fine-tooth comb, and made a clean sweep of the cellar. He may have gotten over the wall, but I don't think it.

There 's a lot of broken bottles on top. I 'll try the bedrooms now."

As the words fell from his lips Mrs. Horn rose from her seat on the stairs, straight as a soldier on guard. The light from the lantern illumined her gray hair and threw into strong relief her upraised hand, — the first of millions raised in protest against the invasion of the homes of the South. The detective saw the movement, and a grim smile came into his face.

"Unless they 'll bring him out," he added slowly. "This young feller knows where he is. Make him tell."

Colonel Clayton turned to Oliver. "Is he upstairs, Oliver?"

"No."

"You give me your word of honor, Oliver, that he is not upstairs?"

"I do."

"Of course he 'd say that. Here, I 'll know pretty d —— quick," muttered the detective, moving toward the stairway.

The colonel stepped forward and barred his way with his arm.

"Stay where you are! You don't know these people. If Oliver says he is not upstairs I believe him. Those Horns don't know how to lie. Your information is wrong. The man never

entered the house. You must look for the Yankee somewhere else." Waiting until the detectives had left the hall, he raised his hat, and with some show of feeling said, —

"I am sorry, Sallie, that we had to upset you so. When you and Richard see this matter in its true light you 'll think as I do. If these scoundrels are to be permitted to come here and burn our homes, we want to know which side our friends are on."

"You are the judge of your own conduct, John Clayton," she answered calmly. "This night's work will follow you all your life. Malachi, show Colonel Clayton to the door and close it behind him."

Three nights later Malachi admitted a man he had never seen before. He was short and thick-set, and had a grim, firmly set jaw. Under the lapel of his coat was a gold shield. He asked for Mr. Horn, who had lately been living in New York. He would not come inside the drawing-room, but sat in the hall on the hair-cloth sofa, his knees apart, his cap in his hand.

"I 'm the chief of police," he said to Oliver, without rising from his seat, "and I come because Mr. Cobb sent me. That 's between ourselves, remember. You 'll have to get out

of here at once. They 've got a yarn started that you 're a government detective sent down here to spot rebel sympathizers, and they 'll make it warm for you. I 've looked into it and I know it ain't so, but this town 's in no shape to listen to anything. Besides, a while ago one of my men found your friend's uniform in the cellar where you hid it behind the barrels, and the handkerchief all blood, with your name on it; and they 've got you dead to rights. That 'll all be out in the morning papers and make it worse for you. You need n't worry about *him*. He 's all right. Mr. Cobb found him at daylight this morning just where your nigger left him, and drove him over to the junction. He 's with his regiment by this time. Get your things together quick as you can. I 'll wait for you and see you safe aboard the owl train."

Within the hour Oliver had turned his back on his home and all that he loved.

XIX

THE SETTLING OF THE SHADOW

THE bruised crocuses never again lifted their heads in Kennedy Square.

With the settling of the shadow — a shadow black with hate — men forgot the perfume of flowers, the rest and cool of shady nooks, the kindling touch of warm hands, and stood apart with eyes askance ; women shuddered and grew pale, and sad-faced children peered out through closed blinds.

Within the Square itself, along paths that had once echoed to the tread of slippered feet, armed sentries paced, their sharp challenges breaking the stillness of the night. Outside its wrecked fences strange men in stranger uniforms strode in and out of the joyless houses ; tired pickets stacked their arms on the unswept piazzas, and panting horses nibbled the bark from the withered trees ; rank weeds choked the gardens ; dishevelled vines clung to the porches, and doors that had always swung wide

to the gentle tap of loving fingers were opened timidly to the blow of the sword-hilt.

Kennedy Square became a tradition.

Some civilizations die slowly. This one was shattered in a day by a paving stone in the hands of a thug.

XX

THE STONE MUGS

FREDERICK STONE, N. A., member of the Stone Mugs, late war correspondent and special artist on the spot, paused before the cheerful blaze of his studio fire, shaking the wet snow from his feet. He had tramped across Washington Square in drifts that were over his shoe-tops, mounted the three flights of steps to his cosey rooms, and was at the moment expressing his views on the weather, in terms more forcible than polite, to our very old friend, Jack Bedford, the famous marine painter. Bedford, on hearing the sound of Fred's footsteps, had strolled in from his own studio, in the same building, and had thrown himself into a big arm-chair, where he was sitting hunched up, his knees almost touching his chin, his round head covered by a skullcap that showed above the chair-back.

"Nice weather for ducks, Jack, is n't it? Can't see how anybody can get here to-night," cried Fred, striking the mantel with his wet cap,

and scattering the raindrops over the hearth. "Just passed a Broadway stage stuck in a hole as I came by the New York Hotel. Been there an hour, they told me."

"Should n't wonder. Whose night is it, Fred?" asked Jack, stretching out one leg in the direction of the cheery blaze.

"Horn's."

"What 's he going to do?"

"Give it up. Ask me an easy one. Said he wanted a thirty by forty. There it is on the easel," and Fred moved a chair out of his way, hung his wet coat and hat on a peg behind the door, and started to clear up a tangle of artillery harness that littered the floor.

"Thirty by forty, eh," grunted Jack, from the depths of his chair. "Thunder and Mars! Is the beggar going to paint a panorama? Thought that canvas was for a new cavalry charge of yours!" He had lowered the other leg now, making a double-barrelled gun of the pair.

"No; it 's Horn's. He 's going to paint one of the fellows to-night."

"In costume?" Jack's head was now so low in the chair that his eyes could draw a bead along his legs to the fire.

"Yes, as an old burgomaster or something

with a ruff," and he kicked an army blanket into a corner as he spoke. "There 's the ruff hanging on that pair of foils. Waller sent it over." Then his merry eyes fell on Jack's sprawled-out figure, his feet almost in the grate, a favorite attitude of his neighbor's when tired out with the day's work, — comfortable, perhaps, but especially objectionable at the moment.

"Here — get up, you old stick in the mud! Don't sit there, doubled up like a government mule," he laughed. (The army lingo still showed itself once in a while in Fred's speech.) "Help me get this room ready or I 'll whale you with this," and he waved one end of a trace over his head. "If the fellows are coming they 'll be here in half an hour. Shove back that easel and bring in that beer. It 's outside the door in a box. I 'll get out the tobacco and pipes."

Jack stretched both arms above his head, emitted a yawn that could be heard in his room below, and sprang to his feet.

Fred, by this time, had taken down from a closet a tin box of crackers, unwrapped a yellow cheese, and was trimming its raw edges with a palette knife. Then they both moved out a big table from the inner room to the larger one; and while Jack placed the eatables on its

bare top, Fred mounted a chair, and began lighting a circle of gas-jets that hung from the ceiling of the skylight. The war painter was host to-night, and the task of arranging the rooms for the comfort of his fellow members consequently devolved upon him.

The refreshments having been made ready, Fred roamed about the rooms straightening the pictures on the walls, — an old fad of his when guests of any kind were expected, — punching the cushions and Turkish saddle-bags into plumpness, that he had picked up in a flying trip abroad the year the war was over, and stringing them along the divan ready for the backs and legs of the club members. Next he stripped the piano of a collection of camp sketches that had littered it up for a week, dumped the pile into a closet, and with a sudden wrench of his arms, whirled the instrument itself close against the wall. Then some firearms, saddles, and artillery trappings were hidden away in dark corners, and a lay figure, clothed in fatigue cap and blue overcoat, and which had done duty as "a picket" during the day, was wheeled around with its face to the wall, where it stood guard over Fred's famous picture of "The Last Gun at Appomattox." His final touches were bestowed on the grate fire and the coal-scuttle,

both of which were replenished from a big pine box in the hall.

Jack Bedford, meanwhile, had busied himself rolling another table, a long one, under the circle of gas-jets, so that the men could see to work the better, and loading it with palettes, china tiles, canvases, etc., to be used by the members of the club in their work of the evening. Last of all and not by any means the least important, Jack, by the aid of a chair, gathered together, on the top shelf of the closet, the unique collection of stone beer mugs from which the club took its name. These he handed down one by one to Fred, who arranged them in a row on one end of the long table. The mugs were to hold the contents of sundry bottles of beer, now safely stowed away in the lidless, pigeon-holed box, standing in the hall, which Fred unloaded later, placing the bottles on the window sill outside to cool.

Before they had ended their preparations, the stamping of feet on the stair was heard, the door was thrown back, and the several members of the club began to arrive.

The great Waller came first, brushing the snow from his shaggy coat, looking like a great bear, growling as he rolled in, as was his wont. Close behind him, puffing with the run upstairs,

and half hidden behind Waller's broad shoulders, trotted Simmons, the musician.

Not the tousled, ill-clad Waller, the "Walrus" of former days, — no one dared to call the painter by any such names since his picture took the Médaille d'Honneur at Paris, — and not the slender, smooth-faced Simmons, who in the old days was content to take his chances of filling a vacancy at Wallack's or the Winter Garden, when some one of the regular orchestra was under the weather; but a sleek, prosperous, rotund Waller, — with a bit of red in his button-hole, a wide expanse of shirt front, and a waxed mustache, — and a thoughtful, slightly bald, and well-dressed Simmons, with gold eyeglasses, and his hair worn long in his neck, as befitted the leader of an orchestra whose concerts crowded the Academy to the doors.

These two arrivals nodded to Jack and Fred, Waller cursing the weather as he hung up his coat on a peg behind the door (unnecessary formalities of every kind, including the shaking of hands and asking after each other's health, were dispensed with by men who saw each other several times a day at their different haunts), and Simmons, without stopping to take off his wet coat, flung his hat on the divan,

crossed the room, and seated himself at the piano.

"Went this way, Waller, did n't it ? " said Simmons, striking the keys, continuing the conversation the two had evidently had on the stairs. "Never heard Parepa in better voice. She filled every corner of the house. Crug told me he was up in Africa in the back row and never missed a note. Do you remember this ? " and the musician's fingers again slipped over the keys, and one of the great singer's trills rippled through the room, to which Waller nodded approvingly, mopping his wet face with his handkerchief as he listened.

The opening and shutting of the door, the stamping of feet, the general imprecations hurled at the climate, and the scattering of wet snow and raindrops about the entrance became constant. Crug bustled in, — a short, thick-set, rosy-cheeked young fellow in a black mackintosh and a white silk muffler, — a 'cellist of repute, who had spent two years at the Conservatoire, and who had once played for Eugénie at one of her musicales at the Tuileries, a fact he never let you forget. And close behind him came Watson, the landscape painter, who had had two pictures accepted by the Royal Academy, — one of them hung on the line, a great

honor for an American; and after them blue-eyed, round-faced Munson, a pupil of Kaulbach, and late from Munich; as well as Harry Stedman, Post, the art critic, and one or two others.

Each man as he entered divested himself of his wet garments, warmed his hands at the blazing grate fire, and, reaching over the long table, picked up a clay or corncob pipe, stuffing the bowl full of tobacco from a cracked Japanese pot that stood on the mantel. Then striking a match he settled himself into the nearest chair, joining in the general talk or smoking quietly, listening to what was being said about him. Now and then one would walk to the window, raise the sash, uncork a bottle of beer where Fred had placed it, empty its contents into one of the mugs, and resume his seat, mug in one hand, pipe in the other.

Up to this time no work had been done, the courtesies of the club permitting none to begin until the member whose night it was had arrived.

As the half hour slipped away the men began to grow restless.

"If it 's Horn's night, why the devil does n't he come, Fred?" asked Waller in a querulous tone. Although the great sheep painter had lost

his sobriquet since the old days, he had never parted with his right to growl.

"He 'll be here," cried Simmons from his seat by the piano. His fingers were still rippling gently over the keys, although he had stopped once just long enough to strip off his wet overcoat. "I met him at Margaret Grant's this afternoon. She had a little tea."

"There every afternoon, is n't he, Simmons?" asked Munson, who was smoking quietly.

"Should n't wonder," came the response between the trills.

"How 's that affair coming on?" came a voice out of the tobacco smoke.

"Same old way," answered some one at the lower end of the table, — "still waiting for the spondulix."

"Seen her last picture?" remarked Watson, knocking the ashes from his pipe. "The one she scooped the medal with?"

"Yes. Rouser, is n't it?" called out Waller. "Best thing she has done yet. She 's a great woman. Hello! there he is! This is a pretty time for him to put in an appearance!"

The door opened and Oliver walked in, a wet umbrella in one hand, his coat-collar turned up, his mustache beaded with melted snowdrops.

"What 's it doing outside, Ollie, — raining cats and dogs ? " Jack called out.

"No, going to clear up. It 's stopped snowing and getting colder. Oh, what a night! I love a storm like this; it sets my blood tingling! Sorry to keep you waiting, gentlemen, but I could n't help it. It won't make any difference ; I can't begin, any way. Bianchi won't be here for an hour. Just met him on the street — he 's going to bring a guest, he says."

"Who 's he going to bring ? " shouted Simmons, who had risen from his seat at the piano, and was now sorting out some sheets of music that Fred had just laid on its top.

"He won't tell ; says it 's a surprise," answered Oliver, slipping off his coat.

"A surprise, is it ? " grumbled Waller. "I 'll bet it 's some greasy foreigner." He had left Simmons's side and was now standing by the mantel, filling a pipe from the bowl. "Bianchi has always got a lot of cranks about him."

Oliver hung his wet coat among the row of garments lining the wall, — he had come twice as far as the others, — crowded his dripping umbrella into a broken Chinese jar that did duty as a rack, and, catching sight of the canvas, walked toward the easel holding the thirty by forty.

"Where did you get it, Freddie ? " he said,

putting his arms around the shoulders of his old chum and dragging him toward the easel for a closer inspection of the grain of the canvas.

"Snedecor's."

"Just right, old man. Much obliged," and he felt the grain of the cloth with his thumb. "Got a ruff?" and he glanced about him. "Oh, yes; I see. Thanks."

The men, now that Oliver had arrived, drew up around the long table. Some began setting their palettes; others picked out, from the common stock before them, the panels, canvases, china plates, or sheets of paper, which, under their deft touches, were so soon to be covered with dainty bits of color.

It was in many ways a remarkable club. Most of its members had already achieved the highest rank in their several professions and outside the walls of this eyrie were known as earnest, thoughtful men, envied and sought after by those who respected their aims and successes.

Inside these cosey rooms all restraint was laid aside, and each man's personality and temperament expressed itself without reserve. Harry Stedman, who perhaps had been teaching a class of students all the morning in the new building of the National Academy of Design, each one of whom hung upon his words as if he

had been inspired, could be found here a few hours later joining in a chorus with a voice loud enough to rattle every mug on the table.

Waller, who doubtless that same night had been the bright particular star at some smart dinner uptown, and whose red ribbon had added such *éclat* to the occasion, and whose low voice and quiet manners and correct, conventional speeches had so charmed and captivated the lady on his right, would, when once in this room, sit astride some chair, a pipe in one hand, a mug of beer in the other. Here he would discuss with Simmons or Jack or Oliver his preference of Chopin over Beethoven, or the difference between Parepa-Rosa and Jenny Lind, or any topic which had risen out of the common talk, and all, too, with a grotesqueness of speech and manner that would have frozen his hostess of the dinner-table dumb with astonishment could she have seen him.

And so with the others. Each man was frankly himself and in undress uniform when under Fred's skylight, or when the club was enjoying any one of its various festivals and functions.

Oliver's election into the organization had, therefore, been to him one of the greatest honors he had received since his skill as a painter had been recognized by his fellows, — an honor

not conferred upon him because he had been one of the earlier members of the old Union Square organization, many of whom had been left out, but entirely because he was not only the best of fellows, but among the best of painters as well; an honor, too, which brought with it the possibility of a certain satisfying of his tastes. Only once before had he found an atmosphere so congenial, and that was when the big hemlocks that he loved stood firm and silent about him — companions in a wilderness that rested him.

The coming together of such a body of men, representing, as they did, the choicest the city afforded in art, literature, and music, had been as natural and unavoidable as the concentration of a mass of iron filings toward a magnet. That insatiable hunger of the Bohemian, that craving of the craftsman for men of his kind, had at last overpowered them, and the meetings in Fred's studio were the inevitable result.

Many of these devotees of the arts had landed on the barren shores of America, — barren of even the slightest trace of that life they had learned to love so well in the Quartier Latin in Paris and in the Rathskellers of Munich and Düsseldorf, — and had wandered about in the uncongenial atmosphere of the commonplace until this retreat had been opened to them.

Some, like Fred Stone and Jack Bedford, who had struggled on through the war, too much occupied in the whirl of their life to miss at the time the associations of men of similar tastes, had eagerly grasped the opportunity when it came, and others, like Oliver, who had had all they could do to get their three meals during the day and a shelter for the night, had hardly been conscious of what they wanted until the club had extended to them its congenial surroundings.

On the trio of painters we knew best in the old days these privations and the uncertainties and disappointments of the war had left their indelible mark. You became aware of this when you saw them among their fellow workers. About Fred's temples many telltale gray hairs were mingled with the brown, and about his mouth and eyes were deeper lines than those which hard work alone would have cut. He carried a hole, too, in his right arm, or did until the army surgeon sewed it up; you could see it as a blue scar every time he rolled up his sleeve — a slight souvenir of the Battle of Five Forks. It was bored out by a bullet from the hands of a man in gray when Fred, dropping his sketch-book, had bent to drag a wounded soldier from under an overturned caisson. He

carried no scar, however, in his heart. That organ beat with as keen a sympathy and as warm a spirit of *camaraderie* as it did when it first opened itself to Oliver's miseries in Union Square.

Jack Bedford, gaunt and strong of limb, looking a foot taller, had more than once been compelled to lay down his painter's palette and take up the sign painter's brush, and the telltale wrinkles about his eyes and the set look about his mouth testified but too plainly to the keenness of his sufferings.

And Oliver —

Ah ! what of Oliver, and of the changes in him since that fatal night in Kennedy Square when he had been driven away from his home and made an outcast because he had been brave enough to defend a helpless man ?

You can see at a glance, as you watch him standing by the big easel, his coat off, to give his arm freer play, squeezing the tubes of color on his palette, that he is not the boy you knew some years ago. He is, you will admit, as strong and alert-looking as he was that morning when he cleared the space in front of Margaret's brother with a cart rung. You will concede, too, that the muscles about his chest and throat are as firmly packed, the eyes as keen, and the

smile as winning, but you will acknowledge that the boy in him ends there. As you look the closer you will note that the line of the jaw is more cleanly cut than in his younger days; that the ears are set closer to the finely modelled head; that the nose is more aquiline, the eyes deeper, and that the overhanging brow is wrinkled with one or more tight knots that care has tied, and which only loosen when his face breaks into one of his old-time smiles. The mustache is still there — the one which Sue once laughed at; but it has lost its silky curl and stands straight out now from the corners of his mouth, its points reaching almost to the line of his ears. There is, too, beneath it a small imperial, giving to his face the debonair look of a cavalier, and which accentuates more than any other one thing his Southern birth and training. As you follow the subtle outlines of his body you find, too, that he is better proportioned than he was in his early manhood, — thinner around the waist, broader across the shoulders; pressed into a closer mould; more compact, more determined-looking. But for the gleam that now and then flashes out of his laughing eyes and the winning smile that plays about his mouth, you would perhaps think that the years of hardship through which he has passed have hardened his nature.

But you would be wrong about the hardening process, although you would have been entirely right about the hardship.

They had, indeed, been years of intense suffering, full of privations, self-denial, and disappointments, not only in his New York home but in Kennedy Square, whenever at long intervals he had gone back to the old house to cheer its inmates in their loneliness, — a loneliness relieved only by the loyalty of old Malachi and Hannah and the affection and sympathy of their immediate relatives and of such close friends as Amos Cobb, who had never left his post, Miss Clendenning, Dr. Wallace, Nathan, and some others. But this sympathy had not always been extended to Oliver — not by his old schoolmates and chums, at least. Even Sue had passed him in the street with a cold stare, and not a few of the other girls — girls he had romped with many a night through the cool paths of Kennedy Square — had drawn their skirts aside as he passed lest he should foul them with his touch.

But his courage had not wavered, nor had his strength failed him. The same qualities that had made Richard stick to the motor were in his own blood. His delicately modelled slender fingers, white as ivory, and as sure as a pair of callipers, — so like his father's, — and which, as

we watch him, work so deftly arranging the colors on his palette, adjusting the oil cup, trying the points of the brushes on his thumb-nail, gathering them in a sheaf in his left hand as they answer his purpose, had served him in more ways than one since he took that midnight ride back from his old home in Kennedy Square. These same hands, that look so white and well kept as he stands by his easel in the full glare of the gas-jets, had been his sole reliance during these days of toil and suffering. They had provided all the bread that had gone into his mouth, and every stitch of clothes that had covered his back. And they had not been over-particular as to how they had accomplished it nor at what hours or places. They had cleaned lithographic stones, the finger-nails stained for weeks with colored inks ; they had packed hardware ; they had driven a pen far into the night on space work for the daily papers ; they had carried a dinner pail to and from his lodgings to the factory two miles away where he had worked — very little in this pail some of the time ; they had posted ledgers, made office fires, swept out stores, — anything and everything that his will compelled and his necessities made imperative. And they had done it all forcefully and willingly, with the persistence and sureness of machines

accomplishing a certain output in so many hours. Joyfully too, sustained and encouraged by the woman he loved, and whose heart through all his and her vicissitudes was still his own.

All this had strengthened him; had taught him that any kind of work, no matter how menial, was worthy of a gentleman, so long as his object was obtained — in this case his independence and his livelihood. It had been a bitter experience at first, especially for a Southerner brought up as he had been; but he had mastered it at last. His early training had helped him, especially that part which he owed to his mother, who had made him carry the market basket as a boy, to humble a foolish and hurtful pride. He was proud enough of it now.

But never through all these privations had these same white hands and this tired body and brain been so occupied that they could not find time during some one of the hours of the day and night to wield the brush, no matter how urgent had been the call for the week's board — wielding it, too, so lovingly and knowingly, and with such persistency, that to-night, although still poor, he stood recognized as a rising man by the men in the front rank of the painters of his time.

And with his mother's consent, too. Not that

he had asked it in so many words and stood hesitating, fearing to take the divergent path until he could take her willing blessing with him. He had made his decision firmly and against her wishes. She had kept silent at first, and had watched his progress as she had watched his baby steps, tearfully, — prayerfully at times, — standing ready to catch him if he fell. But that was over now. The bigness of her vision, covering margins wide enough for new impressions, impressions which her broad mind, great enough and honest enough to confess its mistakes, always welcomed and understood, had long since made clear to her what in her early anxiety she had ignored, — that if her son had inherited the creative and imaginative gifts of his father (those gifts which she so little understood), he had also inherited from her a certain spirit of determination, together with that practical turn of mind which had given the men of her own family their eminence. In proof of this she could not but see that the instability which she had so dreaded in his earlier years had given way to a certain fixedness of purpose and firm self-reliance. The thought of this thrilled her as nothing else in his whole career had ever done. All these things helped reconcile her to his choice of a profession.

Oliver, now thoroughly warm and dry, busied himself getting his brushes and paints together and scraping off one of Fred's palettes. Bianchi's bald head and fat, red, smooth-shaven face with its double chin — time had not dealt leniently with the distinguished lithographer — had inspired our hero to attempt a "Franz Hals smear," as Waller called it; and the Pole, when he arrived, was to sit for him in the costume of an old Dutch burgomaster, the big white ruff furnishing the high lights in the canvas.

By the time Oliver had arranged his palette the club had settled itself for work, the smoke from the pipes floating in long lines toward the ceiling, befogging the big white albatross that hung from a wire in the skylight. Munson, who had rubbed in a background of bitumen over a square tile, sat next to Fred, who was picking out, with the end of a wooden match, the outlines of an army wagon sketched on a plate smeared with color. Simmons was looking over a portfolio that Watson, a new member, had brought with him, filled with a lot of his summer sketches made on the Normandy coast.

One view of the fish market at Dieppe caught Oliver's eye. The slant of light burnishing the roof of the church to silver and flooding the pavement of the open square, crowded with

black figures, the white caps of the fishwomen indicated by crisp pats of the brush, pleased our painter immensely.

"Charming, old man," said Oliver, turning to Watson. "How long did it take you?"

"About four hours."

"Looks like it," growled Waller, reaching over Oliver's shoulder and drawing the sketch toward him. "That 's the gospel of 'smear,' Horn," and he tossed it back. "Not a figure in the group has got any drawing in it."

Waller had set his face against the new outdoor school, and never lost a chance to ridicule it.

"That 's not what Watson is after," exclaimed Oliver. "The figures are mere accessories. The dominating light is the thing; he 's got that," and he held the sketch close to the overhead gas-jets, so that the members could see it the better.

"Dominating light be hanged! What 's the use of slobbering puddles of paint over a canvas and calling it *plein air*, or impressionism, or out of doors, or some such rot? Get down to business and *draw*. When you have done that you can talk. It can't be done in four hours, and if some of you fellows keep on the way you 're going, you 'll never do it in four years."

"A four hours' sketch handled as Watson has this," said Oliver thoughtfully, "is better than four years' work on one of your Hudson Rivery things. The sun does n't stand still long enough for a man to get more than an expression of what he sees — that is, if he 's after truth. The angle of shadow changes too quickly, and so do the reflected lights."

"What 's the matter with the next day ? " burst out Waller. "Can't you take up your sketch where you left off ? You talk as if every great picture had to be painted before luncheon."

"But there is no 'next day,' " interrupted Watson. "I entirely agree with Horn." He had been listening to the discussion with silent interest. "No next day like the one on which you began your canvas. The sky is different — gray, blue, or full of fleecy, sunny clouds. Your shadows are more purple, or blue, or gray, depending on your sky overhead, and so are your reflections. If you go on and try to piece out your sketch, you make an almanac of it, not a portrait of what you saw. I can pick out the Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays on that kind of a sketch as soon as I see it. Nature is like a bird, — if you want to surprise her, you must let go both barrels when she rises ; if you

miss her at your first shot you will never have another chance, not at that particular bird."

"Well, but suppose you *do* happen to have two days alike," insisted Waller. "I have seen thirty days on a stretch in Venice without a cloud. What then?" The bird simile had evidently not appealed to the great critic.

"Then ten chances to one you are not the same man you were the day before," replied Watson calmly, laying down his pipe. "You have had bad news from home,or your liver is out of order, or worse still you have seen some new subject which has taken hold of you, and your first enthusiasm has oozed away. If you persist in going on you will either undo what you did yesterday or you will trust to your memory of what you *think* yesterday was, to finish your sketch by. The first fills it full of lies and the second full of yourself; neither have anything to do with nature. Four hours, Waller, not a minute more. You 'll come to it before you die."

"That depends on what you have got to paint with," snapped out Jack Bedford, who was trying to clean a dingy-looking palette with a knife. "Whose dirt dump is this, anyhow?" and he held it up to view. "Might as well try to get sunlight out of powdered brick. Look at that

pile of mud!" and he pointed to some dry color near the thumb-hole.

"Which palette?" came a voice.

Jack held it up for the inspection of the room.

"Oh, that 's Parker Ridgway's," answered Fred. "He was here the other day and made a half-hour's sketch of a model I had."

The announcement of Ridgway's name was greeted with shouts of laughter. He was a society painter of the day, pupil of Winterhalter and Meyer von Bremen, and had carried off more portraits and at higher prices than all the other men put together.

"Keep on! Keep on! Laugh away," grumbled Waller, squeezing a tube of Prussian blue on his palette. "When any one of you fellows can get $4000 for a season's work you can talk; until you do, you can keep your mouths shut as tight as Long Island clams."

"Who got it?"

"The Honorable Parker Ridgway, R. A., P. Q., and I don't know but X. Y. Z.," roared Waller.

"I 'd like to know how?" asked Watson, reaching over Fred's arm for the bottle of turpentine.

"That 's what he did," snapped out Waller.

"Did what?"

"Knew how."

"But he does n't know how!" cried Munson from across the table. "I sat alongside of that fellow at the Ecole for two years. He can't draw, and never could. His flesh was beastly, his modelling worse, and his technique — a botch. You can see what color he uses," and he pointed to the palette Jack was trying to clean.

"Granted, my boy," said Waller. "I did n't say he could *paint;* I said he knew how to earn $4000 in three months painting portraits."

"He never painted a portrait worth four cents. Why, I knew" —

"Dry up, Munson!" interrupted Jack. "Go on, Waller, tell us how he did it."

"By using some horse sense and a little tact; getting in with the procession and holding his end up," retorted Waller in a solemn tone.

"Give him room! Give him room!" cried Oliver, with a laugh, pouring a little dryer into his oil cup. He loved to hear Waller talk. "He flings his words about as if they were chunks of coal," he would always say.

The great man wheeled his chair around and faced the room. Oliver's words had sounded like a challenge.

"Keep it up! — pound away," he cried, his face reddening. "I 've watched Ridgway ever

since he arrived here last spring, and I will give you his recipe for success. He did n't fall overboard into a second-rate club as soon as he got here and rub his brushes on his coat-sleeve to look artistic. Not much ! He had his name put up at the Union ; got Croney to cut his clothes and Leary to make his hats; played croquet with the girls he knew, drove tandem, — his brother-in-law's, — and dined out every night in the week. Every day or two he would haul out one of his six-foot canvases and give it a coat of bitumen. Always did this when some club swell was around who would tell about it."

"Did it with a sponge," muttered Munson. "Old trick of his ! "

"Next thing he did," continued Waller, ignoring Munson's aside, "was to refuse a thousand-dollar commission offered by a vulgar real-estate man to paint a two-hundred pound pink-silk sofa-cushion of a wife in a tight-fitting waist. This spread like the measles. It was the talk of the club, of dinner-tables and piazzas, and before sundown Ridgway's exclusiveness in taste and artistic instincts were established. Then he hunted up a pretty young married woman occupying the dead-centre of the sanctified social circle, went into spasms over her beauty — so classic, such an exquisite outline; grew

confidential with the husband at the club, and begged permission to make just a sketch only the size of his hand — wanted it for his head of Sappho, Berlin Exhibition. Next he rented a suite of rooms, crowded in a lot of borrowed tapestries, brass, Venetian chests, lamps and hangings; gave a tea — servants this time in livery — exhibited his Sappho; refused a big price for it from the husband; got orders instead for two half-lengths, $1500 each, finished them in two weeks, declined more commissions on account of extreme fatigue; disappeared with the first frost and the best cottage people; booked three more full-lengths in New York, — two to be painted in Paris and the other on his return in the spring; was followed to the steamer by a bevy of beauties, half smothered in flowers, and disappeared in a halo of artistic glory just $4000 in."

Fred broke out into a roar, in which the whole room joined.

"And you call that art, do you?" cried Munson, laying down his palette. His face was flushed, his eyes snapping with indignation.

"I do, my babbling infant," retorted Waller. "I call it the art of making the most of your opportunities and putting your best foot foremost. That's a thing you fellows never seem

to understand. You want to shuffle around in carpet-slippers, live in a garret, and wait until some money-bags climbs up your crazy staircases to discover you. Ridgway puts his foot in a patent-leather pump and silk stocking, and never steps on a carpet that is n't two inches thick. Merchants, engineers, manufacturers, and even scientists, when they have anything to sell, go where there is somebody to buy; why should n't an artist? "

"Just like a fakir peddling cheap jewelry," said Stedman in a low voice, sending a cloud of smoke to the ceiling.

"Or a bunco man trading watches with a farmer," remarked Jack Bedford. "What do you say, My Lord Tom-Noddy?" and he slapped Oliver on the back. The sobriquet was one of Jack's pet names for Oliver; all the Kennedy Square people were more or less aristocrats to Jack Bedford, the sign painter, — all except Oliver.

"I think Waller 's about half right, Jack. As far as Ridgway's work goes, you know and I know that there is n't one man or woman out of a hundred among his brother-in-law's friends who knows whether it 's good or bad — that 's the pity of it. If it 's bad and they buy it, that 's their fault for not knowing any better, not

Ridgway's fault for doing the best he knows how. By silk stockings and pumps I suppose Waller means that Ridgway dressed himself like a gentleman, had his hair cut, and paid some attention to his finger-nails. That 's why they were glad to see him. The day has gone by when a painter must affect a bob-tailed velveteen jacket, long hair, and a slouch hat to help him paint, just as the day has gone by when an artist is not an honored guest in any gentleman's house in town."

"Bravo, Tom-Noddy!" shouted Jack and Fred in a breath. "Drink, you dear old pressed brick! Put your nose into this!" and Fred held a mug of beer to Oliver's lips.

Oliver laid down his sheaf of brushes, buried his nose in the cool rim of the stone mug, the only beverage the club permitted, and was about to continue his talk when his eye rested on Bianchi, who was standing in the open door, his hand upraised so as to bespeak silence.

"Here — you beautiful, bald-headed old burgomaster!" shouted Oliver. "Get into your ruff right away. Been waiting half an hour for you and" —

Bianchi put his fingers to his lips with a whispered hush, knit his brow, and pointed significantly behind him. Every eye turned, and

a breathless silence fell upon the group, followed by a scraping of chairs on the floor as each man sprang to his feet.

Bianchi's surprise had arrived!

XXI

"THE WOMAN IN BLACK"

IN the doorway, immediately behind Bianchi, and looking over the little man's head, stood a woman of perhaps forty years of age, in full evening toilet. About her head was wound a black lace scarf, and hanging from her beautiful shoulders, half concealing a figure of marvellous symmetry, was a long black cloak, open at the throat, trimmed with fur, and lined with watermelon pink silk. Tucked in her hair was a red japonica. She was courtesying to the room with all the poise and graciousness of a prima donna saluting an audience.

Oliver sprang for his coat, and was about to cram his arms into the sleeves, when she cried, —

"Oh, please don't! I wish I could wear a coat myself, so that I could take it off and paint. Oh! the smell of the lovely pipes! It 's heavenly, and it 's so like home. Really," and she looked about her, "this is the only place I have seen in America that I can breathe in. I 've

heard of you all winter and I so wanted to come! I would not give dear Bianchi any rest till he brought me. Oh! I 'm so glad to be here."

Oliver and the others were still standing, looking in amazement at the newcomer. One of the unwritten laws of the club was that no woman should ever enter its doors, a law that until this moment had never been broken.

While she was speaking Bianchi stepped back, and took the tips of the woman's fingers within his own. When she had finished, he thrust out one foot and, with the bow of an impresario introducing a new songstress, said, —

" Gentlemen of the Stone Mugs, I have the honor of presenting you to the Countess Kovalski."

Again the woman courtesied, sweeping the floor with her black velvet skirt, broke out into a laugh, handed her cloak and scarf to Bianchi, who threw them over the shoulders of the lay figure, and moved toward the table, Fred, as host, drawing out a chair for her.

"Oh, what lovely beginnings!" she continued, examining the sketches with her lorgnette, after the members had made their salutations. " Let me make one. I studied two years with Achenbach. You did not know that, Bianchi, did you? There are so many things you do

not know, you lovely man!" She was as much at home as if she had been there every evening of her life.

Still with the same joyous, self-contained air, she settled herself in Fred's proffered chair, picked up one of Jack's brushes, reached over his shoulder, and with a "Please hold still, thank you," scooped up a little yellow ochre from his palette, and unloaded it on a corner of a tile. Then, stripping off her bracelets, she piled them in a heap before her, selected a Greek coin dangling from the end of one of them, propped it up on the table, and began to paint; the men, all of whom were too astonished to resume their work, crowding about her, watching the play of her brush, — a brush so masterful in its technique, that before the picture was finished the room broke out in unrestrained applause.

During all this time she was talking in German to Crug, or in French to Waller, only stopping to light a fresh cigarette which she took from a jewelled case and laid beside her. She could, no doubt, have as easily lapsed into Russian, Choctaw, or Chinese, had there been any such strange people about.

When the men had resumed their customary seats and the room had once more settled to

work, — it had only been a question of sex that had destroyed the equilibrium, a question no longer of value, now that the fair intruder could really *paint*, — Oliver bent over her and said in his most gallant manner, —

"If the Countess Kovalski will be gracious enough to excuse Bianchi (he had never left her elbow), I will try and make a burgomaster of him. Perhaps you will help me tie this around his neck," and he held out the white ruff. He had put on his coat despite her protest.

"What, dear Bianchi in a ruff! Oh! how perfectly charming! That 's really just what he looks like. I 've always told him that Rembrandt ought to have seen him. Come, you sweet man, hold up your beautiful Dutch face."

As she spoke she caught the ruff from Oliver's hand and stretched out her bare arms toward Bianchi.

"No, I 'm not going to pose now," protested the Pole, pushing back her hands. "You can get me any time. Take the countess, Horn. She 'd make a stunner."

"Yes! Yes! Please do," she laughed, springing from her seat and clapping her hands with all the gayety and joyousness of a child over some expected pleasure.

Oliver hesitated for an instant, as he looked

down into her eyes, wondering whether his brush could do justice to their depth. Then he glanced at her supple figure and white skin in contrast to the black velvet, its edge softened by the fall of lace, the dominant, insistent note of the red japonica in her blue-black hair, the flesh tones brilliant under the gas-jets. The color scheme was exactly what he had been looking for all winter, — black, white, and a touch of red.

"I have never been so honored, madam. Nothing could give me greater pleasure," he answered, with a dry smile. "May I escort your ladyship to the platform?" and he held out his hand and conducted her to the stand facing the big easel.

Then there followed a scene such as many of the Stone Mugs had not shared in since they left the Latin Quarter.

The countess stood erect on the raised platform, with head up and slightly turned, the full glare of the gas-jets falling upon her neck and throat, made all the more brilliant by reason of the dark green walls of Fred's studio, which formed the background behind her. One arm was partly raised, a lighted cigarette between her fingers; the other was lost in the folds of the velvet gown. She posed as naturally and

as easily as if she had done nothing else all her life, and with a certain bravado and swing that enchanted everybody in the room.

One talent demanded of the artist members of the club when they sought admission, and insisted upon by the committee, was the ability, possessed in a marked degree by Oliver, of making a rapid, telling sketch from life, and at night. So expert had most of the members become that many of their pictures made under the gaslight were as correct in their color values as those done in the daytime. In this Oliver was past-master. Most of his own work had to be done under artificial light during the long years of his struggle.

The men — they were again on their feet — crowded closer, forming a circle about the easel. They saw that the subject appealed to Oliver, and they knew how much better he could paint when his heart was in his work. His picture of Margaret Grant in the tam-o'-shanter cap, the best portrait at the last exhibition, had proved that.

Oliver saw the interest shown in his work, and put himself on his mettle. He felt that not only his own reputation, but the honor of the Stone Mugs, was at stake. He felt, too, a certain pride and confidence in the sureness of

his touch, — a touch that the woman he loved believed in, one she had really taught him herself. He began by blocking in with a bit of charcoal the salient points of the composition. Fred stood on his left hand, holding a cigar box filled with tubes of color, ready to unscrew their tops and pass them to Oliver as he needed them.

As the dark background of greenish black, under the vigorous strokes of his brush, began to relieve the flesh tones, and the coloring of the lips and the japonica in the hair took their places in the color scheme, a murmur of applause ran through the room. No such piece of night work had ever been painted since the club had come together, and certainly not before.

"A Fortuny, by thunder!" burst out Waller. He had been the first man to recognize Oliver's talent in the old days, and had always felt proud of his foresight.

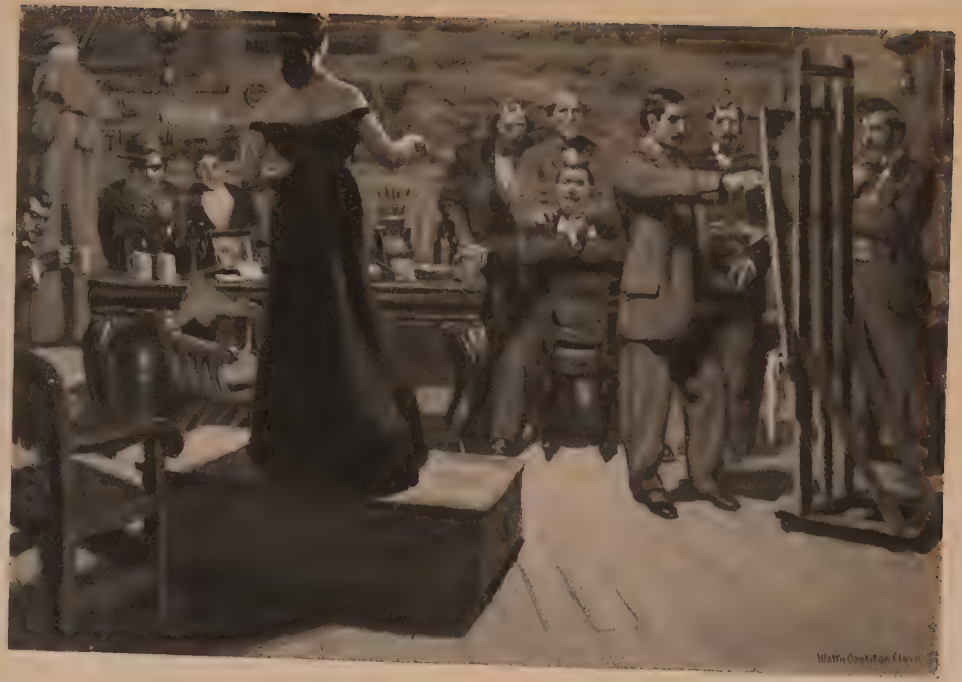
For two hours Oliver stood before his canvas, the countess resting now and then, floating over to the piano, as Simmons had done, running her fingers over its keys, or breaking out into Polish, Hungarian, or French songs at the pleasure of the room. During these rests Oliver turned the picture to the wall. He did not wish her to see it until it was finished. He was

trying some brush tricks that Madge loved, — some that she had learned in Couture's atelier, and whose full effect could only be recognized in the finished work.

When the last touches of Oliver's brush had been laid on the canvas, and the modest signature, O. H., as was the custom, had been affixed to its lower left-hand corner, he made a low salaam to the model, and whirled the easel in front of her.

The cry of delight that escaped her lips was not only an expression of her pleasure, but it convinced every man in the club that the countess's technical knowledge of what constituted a work of art equalled her many other accomplishments. She sat looking at it with thoughtful, grave face, and her whole manner changed. She was no longer the woman who had so charmed the room. She was the connoisseur, the expert, the jury of last resort. Oliver watched her with absorbing interest as he sat wiping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Monsieur Horn," she said slowly, as if weighing each word, "if you come to my country they will cover you all over with medals. I had no idea any one in this new land could paint as you do. You are a master. Permit me, monsieur, to make you my obeisance," — and



FOR TWO HOURS OLIVER STOOD BEFORE HIS CANVAS.

she dipped back on one foot and swept the floor with her skirts.

Oliver laughed, returned the bow with a mock flourish, and began rolling down his shirt-cuffs; a thrill quivering through him — that thrill only felt by a painter when he is conscious that some work of his brush has reached the high-water mark of his abilities. For only the artist in him had been at work. What stirred him was not the personality of the countess — not her charm nor beauty, but the harmony of the colors playing about her figure: the reflected lights in the blue-black of her hair; the soft tones of the velvet lost in the shadows of the floor, and melting into the walls behind her; the high lights on the bare shoulder and arms divided by the severe band of black; the subdued grays in the fall of lace uniting the flesh tones and the bodice; and, more than all, the ringing note of red sung by the japonica tucked in her hair, and which found its only echo in the red of her lips, red as a slashed pomegranate with the white seed-teeth showing through. The other side of her beautiful self — the side that lay hidden under her soft lashes and velvet touch, the side that could blaze and scorch and burn to cinders — that side Oliver had never once seen nor thought of.

This may have been because, while his fin-

gers worked on, his thoughts were somewhere else, and that he saw another face as he mixed his colors, and not that of the siren before him. Or it may have been that, as he looked into the eyes of the countess, he saw too deeply into the whirlpool of passion and pain which made up the undercurrent in this beautiful woman's strange life.

Not so the others, many of whom were the most serious-minded of men where women were concerned. Crug — who, to quote Waller, had drifted into a state of mind bordering on lunacy — was so completely taken off his feet that he again led her ladyship by her finger-tips to the piano, and, with his hand on his heart and his eyes upraised, begged her to sing for him some of the songs of her native land, and in the tongue of her own people; the countess complying so graciously and singing with such consummate taste and skill, throwing her soul into every line, that the men soon broke out in rounds of applause, crowding about her with the eagerness of bees around a hive, — all except Waller and Oliver, who sat apart, quietly watching her out of the corners of their eyes.

The portrait was forgotten now; so were the sketches and tiles, and the work of the evening. So was everything else but the woman

who dominated the room. She kept her seat on the piano-stool, the centre of the group, as a queen of the ballet sits on a painted throne, flashing her eyes from one to the other, wheeling about to dash off an air from some unknown opera, — unknown to those who listened, — laying her lighted cigarette on the music-rack as she played, and whirling back again to tell some anecdote of the composer who wrote it, or some incident connected with its production in Vienna or Warsaw or St. Petersburg, the club echoing her every whim.

It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the staid and sober-minded Stone Mugs, under these conditions, completely lost their heads, and that when Oliver picked up an empty beer mug, the symbol of the club used in all ceremonies, and began filling it with the names of the members, which he had written on slips of paper, preparatory to the drawing of the lottery for the picture which he had just finished, — every meeting night a lottery was drawn, the lucky winner possessing the picture of the evening, — Crug and Munson should have simultaneously sprung to their feet, and, waving their hands over their heads, have proposed, in one and the same breath, that "our distinguished visitor" should have the privilege of adding her

own name to those in Oliver's mug, — the picture to be her own individual property should her patronymic be the first to be drawn from its open mouth.

Waller started to his feet to object, and the words of protest were half out of his mouth when Oliver stopped him. A woman was always a woman to Oliver, no matter what her past or present station in life might be. It was her sex that kept him loyal when any discourtesy was involved.

"Keep still, old man," he whispered. "They've gone crazy, but we can't help it. Get on your feet and vote."

When the sound of the "ayes" adopting Crug and Munson's motion had died away, Oliver inscribed her initials upon a small piece of paper, dropped it in the mug, held it high above the lady's head, and asked her to reach up her dainty fingers and pick out the name of the lucky possessor of "The Woman in Black," as the picture had now been christened. The white arm went up, the jewelled fingers felt about nervously among the little ballots, and then the countess held up a twisted bit of paper.

A burst of applause filled the room. The scrap of paper bore the initials of the countess! "The Woman in Black" was her property.

But the most extraordinary part by far of the evening's performance was still to come.

When the hour of midnight had arrived — the hour of dispersal, a rule rarely broken — the countess called to Bianchi and directed him to go out into the hall and bring in her long black stockings and stout shoes, which she had taken off outside Fred's door, and which she had left hanging on a nail.

I can see her now, — for I, too, was leaning over the same table, Oliver beside me, watching this most extraordinary woman of another world, a woman who had been the idol of almost every capital in Europe, and whom I knew (although Oliver did not) had been quietly conducted out of some of them between dark and daylight, — I can see her now, I say, sitting on the piano-stool, facing the group, the long, black silk stockings that Bianchi had brought her in her hands. I remember just the way in which, after loosening her dainty, red-heeled slippers, she swept aside her skirts, unfastened her garters, and, with the same unconsciousness and ease with which she would have slipped a pair of rubbers over a pair of shoes, drew the long black stockings over her flesh-colored ones, refastening the garters again, talking all the time, first to one and then the other; pausing

only to accentuate some sentence with a wave of her shoe or stocking or cigarette, as the action suited the words.

That the group about her was composed solely of men made not the slightest difference. She was only trying to save those precious flesh-colored silk stockings that concealed her white skin from the slush and snow of the streets. As to turning her back to her hosts during this little change of toilet, that was the last thing that entered her head. She would as soon have stepped into a closet to put on her gloves.

And then, again, why should she be ashamed of her ankles and her well-turned instep and dainty toes, as compact in their silk covering as peas in a pod! She might have been, perhaps, in some one of the satin-lined drawing-rooms around Madison Square or Irving Place, but not here, breathing the blue smoke of a dozen pipes and among her own kind, — the kind she had known and loved and charmed all her life.

After all it was but a question of economy. Broadway was a slough of mud and slush, and neither she nor Bianchi had the price of a carriage to spare.

Oliver watched her until the whole comedy was complete; then, picking up his wet sketch and handing it with the greatest care to Bian-

chi, who was to conduct her ladyship to her lodgings, he placed the long black cloak with the fur trimming and watermelon-colored silk lining about her beautiful bare shoulders, and, with the whole club following and waving their hands good-night, our young gentleman bowed her out and downstairs with all the deference and respect he would have shown the highest lady in the land.

XXII

"MARGARET GRANT — TOP FLOOR"

ONE spring morning, some time after the visit of the countess to the club and the painting of her portrait by Oliver, — the incident had become the talk of the studios before the week was out, — Oliver sat in his own rooms on the top floor, drinking his coffee, the coffee he had boiled himself. The janitor had just slipped two letters through a slit in the door. Both lay on the floor within reach of his hand. One was from his mother, bearing the postmark of his native city; the other was from a prominent picture dealer on Broadway, with a gallery and big window looking out on the street.

Oliver broke the seal of his mother's letter, and moved his chair so that the light from the overhead skylight would fall on its pages.

It read as follows: —

MY DARLING BOY, — Your father goes to you to-morrow. Mr. Cobb was here last night with a letter from some gentleman of means with

whom he has been corresponding. They want to see the motor, so your father and Nathan leave on the early train.

This man's continued kindness is a constant surprise to me. I have always thought it was he who prevented the mortgage from being foreclosed, but I never knew until yesterday that he had written his name under my own the second time the note was to be renewed, and that he has kept it there ever since. I cannot speak of this to him, nor must you, if you see him, for poor old Mr. Stiger told me in confidence. I am the more glad now that we have always paid the interest on the note. The next payment, which you have just sent me, due on the first of the month, is now in my bureau drawer ready for the bank, but I will not have to use it now.

Whether the mortgage can ever be paid off I do not know, for the farm is ruined, I fear. Mr. Mowbray's cousin, who drove over last week to see what was left of the plantations in that section, writes me that there is nothing remaining of your grandfather's place but the bare ground and the house. All the fences have been burned and many of the beautiful trees cut down for firewood. The government still occupies the house and one of the outbuildings, although most of the hospital stores have been moved away.

The last half-year's rent, which was held back, owing to some new ruling from Washington, came, I am thankful to say, two days ago in a check from the paymaster here, owing to Mr. Cobb's intercession. He never loses an opportunity to praise you for what you did for that poor young soldier, and Mr. Stiger told me that when those in authority heard from Mr. Cobb which Mrs. Horn it was, they ordered the rent paid at once. He is always doing just such kindnesses for us. But for this rental I don't know how we would have been able to live and take care of those dependent upon us. We little knew, my son, when we both strove so hard to save the farm, that it would really be our only support. This rent, however, will soon cease, and I tremble for the future. I can only pray my Heavenly Father that something will come out of this visit to New York. It is our only hope now.

Don't lose sight of your father for a moment, my son. He is not well, and gets easily fatigued, and although he is greatly elated over his promised success, as we all are, — and he certainly deserves to be, — I think you will see a great change in him these last few months. I would not have consented to his going had not Nathan gone with him. Nathan insists upon

paying the expenses of the trip; he says it is only fair that he should, as your father has given him an interest in the motor. I earnestly hope for some results, for I shall have no peace until the whole amount of the mortgage is paid back to the bank, and you and Mr. Cobb are released from the burden, so heavy on you, my boy.

There is no other news to tell you. Sue Clayton brought her boy in to-day. He is a sweet little fellow and has Sue's eyes. She has named him John Clayton, after her father. They have made another attempt to find the colonel's body on the battlefield, but without success. I am afraid it will never be recovered.

Lavinia sends her love. She has been much better lately. Her army hospital work has weighed upon her, I think. Three years was too long.

I have the last newspaper notices of your Academy picture pinned on my cushion, and I show them to everybody who comes in. They always delight me. You have had a hard fight, my son, but you are winning now. No one rejoices more than I do in your success. As you said in your last letter, the times have really changed. They certainly have for me. Sorrow and suffering have made me see many things in a different light these last few years.

Malachi and Hannah are well, but the old man seems quite feeble at times.

Your loving mother,

SALLIE T. HORN.

Dear lady, with your soft white hair and deep brown eyes that have so often looked into mine! How dreary were those long days of hate and misery! How wise and helpful you were to every living soul who sought your aid, friend and foe alike! Your great heart sheltered and comforted them all.

Oliver read the letter through and put his lips to the signature. In all his life he had never failed to kiss his mother's name at the bottom of her letters. The only difference was that now he kissed them with an added reverence. The fact of his having proved himself right and her wrong in the choice of his profession made loyalty with him the more tender.

"Dear, dear mother!" he said to himself. "You have had so much trouble lately, and you have been so plucky through it all!" He stopped, looked dreamily across the room, and added with a sigh, "But she has not said one word about Madge, not one single word. She does n't answer that part of my letter; she does n't intend to."

"MARGARET GRANT — TOP FLOOR"

Then he opened the other communication, which read, —

DEAR MR. HORN, — Please call here in the morning. I have some good news for you.

JOHN SNEDECOR.

Oliver turned the picture dealer's letter over, peered into the envelope as if he expected to find some trace of the good news tucked away in its corners, lifted the tray holding his frugal breakfast, and laid it on the floor outside his door ready for the janitor's morning round. Then, picking up his hat, he locked his door, hung an "out card" on the knob, and, strolling downstairs, stepped into the fresh morning air. He knew the dealer well. He had placed two of old Mr. Crocker's pictures with him — one of which had been sold.

When he reached Snedecor's gallery he found the big window surrounded with a crowd gazing intently at an upright portrait in a glittering gold frame, to which was affixed an imposing-looking name-plate bearing the inscription, —

THE WOMAN IN BLACK

BY OLIVER HORN

So this was Snedecor's good news!

Oliver made his way through the crowd and into the open door of the shop, — the shop was in front, the gallery in the rear, — and found the proprietor leaning over a case filled with artists' supplies.

"Has she had it *framed*, Snedecor?" asked Oliver, with a light laugh.

"Not to any alarming extent! I made that frame for Mr. Peter Fish. She sent it here for sale, and Fish bought it. He's wild about it. Says it's the best thing since Sully. He wants you to paint his daughter; that's what I wanted to see you about. Great card for you, Mr. Horn. I congratulate you!"

Oliver gave a low whistle. His own good fortune was for the moment forgotten in his surprise at the woman's audacity. Selling a sketch painted by one of the club! one which had virtually been *given* to her! "Poor Bianchi! He does pick up the queerest people! I wonder if she was out of stockings," he said half aloud.

"Oh, you need n't worry about the Madame; she won't suffer for clothes as long as she's got that pair of eyes in her head. You just ought to have seen her handle old Fish. It was beautiful. But, see here now, you don't want to make old Peter a present of this por-

trait of his daughter. He 's good for a thousand, I tell you. She got a cracking price for that one," and he pointed to the picture.

Again Oliver laughed.

"A cracking price? She must have needed the money bad." The more he thought of it the funnier it seemed.

Snedecor looked surprised. He was thinking of Fish's order and the amount of his commission. Most of Oliver's remarks were unintelligible to him, especially his reference to the stockings.

"What shall I say to him?" Snedecor asked at last.

"Oh, nothing in particular. Just send him to my studio. I 'll be in all to-morrow morning."

"Well, but don't you think you 'd better go and see him yourself now? He 's too big a bug to run after people. That kind of thing don't come every day, you know; you might lose it. Why, he lives right near you in that swell house across the Square."

"Oh, I know him very well," said Oliver, nodding his head. "No, let him come to-morrow to me; it won't hurt him to walk up three flights of stairs. I 'm busy to-day. Now I think of it, there 's one thing, though, you *can* tell

him, and please be particular about it: there will be no advance over my regular price. I don't care to compete with her ladyship."

Without waiting to hear the dealer's protest, he stepped outside the shop and joined the crowd about the window, elbowing each other for a better view of the portrait. No one recognized him. He was too obscure for that. They might after this, he thought with an exultant throb, and a flush of pride crossed his face.

As he walked down Broadway a sense of the humor of the whole situation came over him. Here for years he had been working day and night; running the gauntlet of successive juries and hanging committees, with his best things rejected or skied until his "Tam-o'-Shanter Girl" made a hit; worrying, hoping against hope, racking his brain as to how and when and where he would find the path which would lead him to commercial success, — a difficult task for one too proud to beg for favors and too independent to seek another's aid, — and here, out of the clear sky, had come this audacious Bohémienne, the pet of foyer and studio, — a woman who presented the greatest number of contrasts to the things he held most dear in womankind, — and with a single stroke had cleared the way to success for him. And this, too, not from any love

of him, nor his work, nor his future, but simply to settle a board bill or pay for a bonnet.

Again Oliver laughed, this time so loudly that the man in front turned and looked at him.

"A cracking price," he kept repeating to himself, "a cracking price, eh? and out of old Peter Fish! Went fishing for minnows and hooked a whale, and another little fish for me! I wonder what she baited her hook with. That woman's a genius."

Suddenly he caught sight of the sign of a Long Island florist set up in an apothecary's window between the big green and red glass globes that lined its sides.

Turning on his heel he entered the door.

"Pick me out a dozen red japonicas," he said to the boy behind the counter.

Oliver waited until each short-stemmed blossom was carefully selected, laid on its bed of raw cotton, blanketed with the same covering, and packed in a paper box. Then, taking a card from his pocket, he wrote upon its back, "Most grateful thanks for my share of the catch," slipped it into an envelope, addressed it to "The fair Fisher, The Countess Kovalski," and with a grim smile on his face, kept on down Broadway toward the dingy hotel, the resort of all the

Southerners of the time, to arrange for rooms for his father and Nathan Gill.

Having, with his card and his japonicas, dismissed the countess from his mind, and to a certain extent his obligations, the full importance of this new order of Peter Fish's began to take possession of him. The color rose in his cheeks and an old-time spring and lightness came into his steps. He knew that such a commission, and from such a man, would at once gain for him a recognition from art patrons and a standing among the dealers. Lasting success was now assured him in the line he had chosen for his life's work. It only remained for him to do the best that was in him. Better than all, it had come to him unasked and without any compromising effort on his own part.

He knew the connoisseur's collection. It filled the large gallery adjoining his extensive home on Washington Square, and was not only the best in the city, containing as it did examples of Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Chrome, Sully, and many of the modern French school, — among them two fine Courbets and a Rousseau, — but it had lately been enriched by one or more important American landscapes, notably Sanford Gifford's "Catskill Gorge" and Church's "Tropics," — two canvases which

had attracted more than usual attention at the Spring Exhibition of the Academy. An order, therefore, for a family portrait from so distinguished a patron not only gave weight and dignity to the work of any painter he might select, but it would unquestionably influence his many friends and acquaintances to go and do likewise.

As Oliver, his eyes aglow, his whole heart filled with joy, stepped quickly down the street, the beauty of the day made him throw back his shoulders and drink in long deep breaths, as if he would fill his very pores with its vitality. These early spring days in New York — the most beautiful the world over; not even in Italy can one find better skies — always affected him in this way. There was a strength-giving quality in the ozone, a brilliancy in the sunshine, and a tempered coolness in the air to be found nowhere else. There was, too, a certain picturesqueness in the sky-line of the houses, a sky-line fringed with jets of white steam from the escape-pipes of numerous fires below, which appealed to his artistic sense. These curling plumes that waved so triumphantly in the sparkling morning light, or, stirred by the wind, flapped like milk-white signal flags, breaking at last into tatters and shreds, blurring the edges

of chimney and cornice, were a constant source of delight to the young painter. He would often stop to watch their movements, and as often determine to paint them at the first opportunity. They seemed to express to him something of the happy freedom of one released from pent-up toil; a freedom longed for in his own heart, and which had rarely been his since those blessed days under Moose Hillock, when he and Margaret roamed the woods together.

Still a third cause of rejoicing — and this sent a flutter around his heart — was the near prospect of meeting his dear old father, whom he had not seen for months, not since his last visit home, and whose long years of struggle and waiting seemed now to be so nearly ended.

With these last joyous thoughts filling his mind, he stepped quickly through the corridor of the hotel, approached the desk, and had just given the names of his father and Nathan to the clerk, when a man behind the counter interrupted him with —

"Just arrived. Got in this morning. There they are by the window."

Two quaint-looking old gentlemen were gazing out upon the rush of Broadway, — two old gentlemen so unusual that even the *habitués* of the place, those who sat tilted back all day chip-

ping the arms of their chairs with their penknives, or sipping countless toddies and juleps, were still staring at them in undisguised astonishment. One — it was Nathan — wore a queer hat, bushy white hair, and long, penwiper cloak: it was the same cloak, or another just like it,— the same, no doubt; few new clothes had been bought during the war. And the other — and this was his own dear father — wore a buff waistcoat, high white silk scarf, and brown frock coat, with velvet collar. Neither of them were every-day sights around the corridors of the New York Hotel, even among a collection of human oddities representing every State in the South.

"We thought it best to take the night train, my son," said Richard, starting up at Oliver's caressing touch — he had put both hands on his father's shoulders. "You got your dear mother's letter, of course. Oh, I 'm so glad to see you! Sit down here alongside of us. How well you are looking, my son!" and he patted him lovingly on the arm. "What a whirl it all is! Nathan and I have been here for hours; we arrived at six o'clock. Did you ever see anything like it? The people never seem to stop coming. Ah, this is the place for you, my boy! Everything is so alive, so full of purpose, so intense,

so delightful and inspiring to me! And such a change in the years since I was here!"

He had brought the motor with him. It lay at the moment in a square box inside the office railing. Not the big one which he had just perfected, — that one was at home under the window in the old shop, in the back yard in Kennedy Square, — but a smaller working model made of pine wood, with glass tumblers for jars and imitation magnets wrapped round with thread instead of wire — the whole unintelligible to the layman, but perfectly clear to the scientist. He had with him, too, packed in a small carpet-bag, which lay within reach of his hand, all the patents which had been granted him as the work progressed, besides a huge bundle of papers, such as legal documents, notices from the scientific journals, and other data connected with the great Horn Galvanic Motor, which was soon to revolutionize the motive power of the world. Tucked away in his inside pocket, ready for instant use, was Amos Cobb's letter, introducing "the distinguished inventor, Mr. Richard Horn of Kennedy Square," etc., etc., to the group of capitalists who were impatiently waiting his arrival, and who were to furnish the unlimited sums of money necessary in its development, — unlimited sums being ready

for any scheme, no matter how chimerical, in the flush times through which the country was then passing.

"I have succeeded at last, my boy, as I wrote you," continued Richard, with glowing eyes. "Even that small motor at home — the one you know — that one has a lifting power of a hundred pounds. All that is necessary now is to increase the size of the batteries, and the final result is assured. Let me show you this," and, oblivious of the many eyes fastened on him, he drew toward him the black carpet-bag and took out a sheet of paper covered with red and blue lines. "You see where the differences are. And you see here," and he pointed out the details with his thin white finger, "what I have done since I explained to you the new additions. This drawing, when carried out, will result in a motor with a lifting capacity of ten tons. Ah, Oliver, I cannot tell you what a great relief has come to me now that I know my life's work is crowned with success."

Nathan was quite as happy. Richard was his sun-god. When the light of hope and success flashed in the inventor's quiet, thoughtful face, Nathan basked in its warmth and was radiant in its glow. He needed all the warmth he could get, poor old man. The cold chill of the days of

fear and pain and sorrow had well-nigh shrivelled him up; he showed it in every line of his body. His shoulders were much more bent; his timid, pipe-stem legs the more shaky; the furrows about his face deeper; the thin nose more transparent. All during the war he had literally lived in Richard. The cry of the "extras," and the dull tramp of marching troops, and the rumbling of cars laden with army supplies had jarred on his sensitive ear as would discordant notes in a quartette. Days at a time he would hide himself away in Richard's workshop, helping him with his bellows or glue-pot, or piling the coals on the fire of his forge. The war, while it lasted, paralyzed some men to inaction — Nathan was one of them.

"At last, Oliver, at last!" Nathan whispered to Oliver when Richard's head was turned for a moment. "Nothing now but plain sailing. Ah! it's a great day for dear Richard! I couldn't sleep last night on the train for thinking of him."

As Oliver looked down into Nathan's eyes, glistening with hope and happiness, he wondered whether, after all these long years of waiting, his father's genius was really to be rewarded. Was it the same old story of success, one so often ending in defeat and gloom, he thought,

or had the problem really been solved? He knew that the machine had stood its initial test and had developed a certain lifting power; his father's word assured him of that; but would it continue to develop in proportion to its size?

He turned again toward Richard. The dear face was alight with a new certainty, the eyes brilliant, the smiles about the lips coming and going like summer clouds across the sun. Such enthusiasm was not to be resisted. A fresh hope rose in the son's heart. Could this now almost assured success of his father's help him with Madge? Would their long waiting come any nearer to being ended? Would the sum of money realized be large enough to pay off the dreaded mortgage, and there still be enough for the dear home and its inmates?

He knew how large this hoped-for sum must be, and how closely his own and his mother's honor were involved in its cancellation. Her letter had indeed stated the facts, — this motor was now their only hope outside the work of his own brush.

Perhaps, after all, his lucky day had come. The first gleam of light had been this order of Peter Fish's to paint his daughter, and now here, sitting beside him, was his father with a letter in his pocket addressed to Amos Cobb

from one of the richest men in New York, who stood ready to pay a small fortune for the motor. Then he thought of his mother. What a delight it would be when she could be freed from the millstone that had hung around her neck for years!

He must go and tell Margaret, and take his father and Nathan with him. Yes, his lucky day *had* come.

Soon the two delighted and astonished old gentlemen, under Oliver's guidance, were making their way up Broadway, ostensibly to see his picture at Snedecor's, but really to call upon the distinguished painter, Margaret Grant, whom every one was talking about, both in New York and in Kennedy Square, for one of her pictures graced Miss Clendenning's boudoir at that very moment. Our young Romeo had waited too many months for some one from Kennedy Square to see the woman he loved, and now that the arms of his father and Nathan were linked in his own, and their legs subject to his orders, he did not intend to let many precious minutes pass before he rang Margaret's studio bell.

When Snedecor's window was reached Richard stopped short in amazement.

"Yours, Oliver! Marvellous! Marvellous!"

Richard exclaimed, when the three had wedged their way into the crowd to see the better. "A fine, strong picture, and a most superb-looking woman. Why, I had no idea ! Really ! Really" — and his voice trembled. He was deeply touched. The strength of the coloring, the masterly drawing, the admiring crowd about the window, greatly surprised him. While he had been closeted with his invention, thinking only of its success and bending every energy for its completion, this boy of his had become a master.

"I did n't do my full duty to you, my son," he said, with a tone of sadness in his voice, when they had resumed their walk up Broadway. "You lost much time in finding your life's work. I should have insisted years ago that you follow the trend of your genius. Your dear mother was not willing and I let it go, but it was wrong. From something she said to me the other night I feel sure she sees her mistake now, but I never mention it to her, and do you never let her know I told you. Yes ! You started too late in life, my boy."

"No, dear old Daddy ; I started just in the nick of time and in the right way."

How could he have thought anything else on this lovely spring morning, with the brightest

of skies overhead, his first important order within his grasp, his dear old father and Nathan beside him, and the loveliest girl in the world or on the planets beyond waiting for him at the top of her studio stairs!

"It's most kind of you to say so," continued Richard, dodging the people as he talked, "but couldn't you have learned to work by following your own tastes?"

"No, Dad. I was too confounded lazy and too fond of fun. And then the dear mother wanted me to go to work, and that was always enough for me."

"Oh, my son, it does me good to hear you say so!" And a light shone on the old gentleman's face. "Yes! you *always* considered your mother. You can't think how she has suffered during these terrible years. But for the good offices of Mr. Cobb, whose kindness I shall never forget, I do not see how she could have gone through them as she has. Isn't it fine, my son, to think it is all over? She will never have to worry again — never — never. The motor will end all her troubles. She did not believe in it once, but she does now."

They continued on up Broadway, Oliver in the middle, Richard's arm in his, — he hurrying them both along; steering them across the

streets; avoiding the trucks and dragging them past the windows they wanted to look into, with promises of plenty of time for that to-morrow or next week. Only once did he allow them to catch their breath, and that was when they passed the big bronze statue overlooking Union Square, and then only long enough for the two to take in its outlines and from its pedestal to fix their eyes on the little windows of Miss Teetum's boarding-house, where he had spent so many happy and unhappy days.

Soon the two breathless old gentlemen and equally breathless young guide — the first condition due to the state of the two old gentlemen's lungs and the second due entirely to the state of this particular young gentleman's heart — stood in a doorway just off Madison Square, before a small bell-pull bearing above it a tiny sign reading, "Margaret Grant. Top Floor."

"Miss Grant has been at home only a few months," Oliver burst out as he rang the bell and climbed the stairs. "Since her father's death she has been in Paris with her mother, her cousin, Higbee Shaw the sculptor, and her brother John. A shell injured the drum of John's ear, and while she painted he was under the care of a French specialist. He is still there with his mother. If you think I can paint, just

wait until you see Miss Grant's work. Think, Dad! she has taken two medals in Munich, and last year had honorable mention at the Salon. You remember her brother, of course, don't you, Uncle Nat, — the one Malachi hid over father's shop?"

Uncle Nat nodded his head as he toiled up the steps. He remembered every hour of the hideous nightmare. He had been the one other man besides Richard and the chief of police to shake Oliver's hand that fatal night when he was exiled from Kennedy Square.

Mrs. Mulligan, in white apron, a French cap on her head, and looking as fresh and clean as a trained nurse, opened the door. Margaret had looked her up the very day she landed, and had placed her in charge of her apartment as cook, housekeeper, and lady's maid, with full control of the front door and of her studio. The old woman was not hard to trace; she had followed the schools of the Academy from their old quarters to the new marble building on Twenty-third Street, and was again posing for the draped-life class and occasionally lending a hand to the new janitor. Margaret's life abroad had taught her the secret of living alone, a problem easily solved when there are Mrs. Mulligans to be had for the asking.

"Yes, Mr. Oliver, she 's insoide. Oh! it 's fri'nds ye hev wid ye!" and she started back.

"Only my father and Mr. Gill," and he brushed past Mrs. Mulligan, parted the heavy portières that divided Madge's working studio from the narrow hall, thrust in his head, and called out in his cheeriest voice, —

"Madge, who do you think is outside? Guess! Father and Uncle Nat. Just arrived this morning."

Before Margaret could turn her head the two stood before her: Richard with his hat in his hand, his brown overcoat with the velvet collar over his arm, — he had slipped it off outside, — and Nathan close behind, still in the long penwiper cloak.

"And is it really the distinguished young lady of whom I have heard so much?" exclaimed Richard, with his most courtly bow, taking the girl's outstretched hand in both of his. "I am so glad to see you, my dear, both on your own account and on account of your brother, whom we once sheltered. And how is he now? and your dear mother?"

To all of which Margaret answered in low, gentle tones, her eyes never leaving Richard's, her hand still fast in his; until he had turned

to introduce Nathan, so that he might pay his respects.

Nathan, in his timid, halting way, stepped from behind Richard, and taking her welcoming hand, told her how much he had wanted to know her, since he had seen the picture she had painted, then hanging in Miss Lavinia's home; both because it was the work of a woman and because, too, — and he looked straight into her eyes when he said it and meant every word, — she was the sister of the poor fellow who had been so shamefully treated in his own city. And Margaret, her voice breaking, answered that but for the aid of such kind friends as himself and Oliver, John might never have come back, adding how grateful she and her whole family had been for the kindness shown her brother.

While they were talking Richard, with a slight bow as if to ask her permission, began making the tour of the room, his glasses held to his eyes, examining each thing about him with the air of a connoisseur suddenly ushered into a new collection of curios.

"Tell me who this sketch is by," he asked, stopping before Margaret, and pointing to a small Lambinet, glowing like an opal on the dull-green wall of the studio. "I so seldom see good pic-

tures that a gem like this is a delight. By a Frenchman! Ah! Yes, I see the subtlety of coloring. Marvellous people, these Frenchmen! And this little jewel you have here, this bit of mezzo in color? With this I am more familiar, for we have a good many collections of old prints at home. It is, I think — yes — I thought I could not be mistaken — it is a Morland," and he examined it closely, his nose almost touching the glass.

The next instant he had crossed the room to the window looking out over the city, the smoke and the steam of a thousand fires floating over its wide expanse.

"Come here, my son," he called to Oliver. "Look over that stretch of energy and brains. Is it not inspiring? And that band of silver, moving so quietly and resistlessly out to sea. What a power for good it all is, and what a story it will tell before the century is out!"

Margaret was by his side as he spoke. She had hardly taken her eyes from him since he entered the room, not even when she was listening to Nathan. All her old-time prejudices and preconceived estimates of Richard were slipping away. Was this the man whom she used to think of as a dreamer of dreams, and a shiftless Southerner? This charming old gentleman with

the air of an aristocrat and the keen discernment of an expert? She could hardly believe her eyes.

As for Oliver, his very heart was bursting with pride. It had all happened exactly as he had wanted it, — his father and Margaret had liked each other from the very first moment. And then she had been so beautiful, too, even in her long painting apron and her hair twisted up in a coil on her head. And the little blush of surprise and sweetness which had overspread her face when they entered, and which his father must have seen, and the inimitable grace with which she slipped from her high stool, and with a half courtesy held out her hand to welcome her visitors, and all with the *savoir faire* and charm of a woman of the world! How it all went straight to his heart!

If, however, he had ever thought her pretty in this working costume, he thought her all the more captivating a few minutes later in the little French jacket — all pockets and buttons — which she had put on as soon as the greetings were over and the tour of the room had been made in answer to Richard's delighted questions.

But it was in serving the luncheon, which Mrs. Mulligan had brought in, that his sweetheart was

most enchanting. Her full-rounded figure moved so gracefully when she bent across to hand some one a cup, and the pose of the head was so delicious, and it was all so bewitching, and so precisely satisfied his artistic sense. And he so loved to hear her talk when she was the centre of a group like this, — as much really to see the movement of her lips and the light in her eyes and the gracious way in which she moved her head as to hear what she said.

He was indeed so overflowing with happiness over it all, and she was so enchanting in his eyes as she sat there dispensing the comforts of the silver tray, that he must needs pop out of the room with some impromptu excuse and disappear into the little den which held her desk, that he might dash off a note which he tucked under her writing-pad, — one of their hiding-places, — and which bore the lines, "You were never so much my queen as you are to-day, dearest," and which she found later and covered with kisses before he was halfway down the block on his way back to the hotel with the two old gentlemen.

She was indeed beautiful. The brow was wider and whiter, perhaps, than it had been in the old days under the bark slant, and the look out of the eyes a trifle softer, and with a certain

tenderness in them, — not quite so defiant and fearless ; but there had been no other changes. Certainly none in the gold-brown hair that Oliver so loved. That was still her glory, and was still heaped up in magnificent masses, and with the same look about it of being ready to burst its bonds and flood everything with a river of gold.

"Lots of good news to-day, Madge," Oliver exclaimed, after they had all taken their seats, his father on Margaret's right, with Nathan next.

"Yes, and I have got lots of good news too ; bushels of it," laughed Margaret.

"You tell me first," cried Oliver, bending toward her, his face beaming ; each day they exchanged the minutest occurrences of their lives.

"No, Ollie ; let me hear yours. What 's it about ? Mine 's about a picture."

"So 's mine," exclaimed Oliver, his eyes brimming with fun and the joy of the surprise he had in store for her.

"But it 's about one of your *own* pictures, Ollie."

"So 's mine," he cried again, his voice rising in merriment.

"Oh, Ollie, tell me first!" pleaded Margaret

with a tone in her voice of such coaxing sweetness that only Richard's and Nathan's presence restrained him from catching her up in his arms and kissing her then and there.

"No, not until you have told me yours," he answered with mock firmness. "Mine came in a letter."

"So did mine," cried Margaret, clapping her hands. "I don't believe yours is half as good as mine, and I 'm not going to wait to hear it. Now listen," and she opened an envelope that lay on the table within reach of her hand. "This is from my brother John," and she turned toward Richard and Nathan. "He and Couture, in whose atelier I studied, are great friends. Now please pay attention, Mr. Autocrat," and she looked at Oliver over the edge of the letter and began to read: —

"Couture came in to-day on his way home, and I showed him the photograph Ollie sent me of his portrait of you, — his 'Tam-o'-Shanter Girl,' he calls it. Couture was so enthusiastic about it that he wants it sent to Paris at once so that he can exhibit it in his own studio to some of the painters there. Then he is going to send it to the Salon. So you can tell that 'Johnnie Reb' to pass it along to me by the first steamer; and you can tell him, too, that his last letter

is a month old, and I am getting hungry for another."

"There now! What do you think of that, Mr. Honorable Mention?"

Oliver opened his eyes in astonishment.

"That's just like John, bless his heart!" he answered slowly, as his glance sought the floor. This last drop had filled his cup of happiness to the brim, — some of it was glistening on his lashes.

"Now tell me your good news," she continued, her eyes still dancing. She had seen the look, but misunderstood the cause.

Oliver raised his eyes.

"Oh, it's not nearly as good as yours, Madge, in one way, and yet in another it's a heap better. What do you think? Old Peter Fish wants me to paint his daughter's portrait."

Margaret laid her hand on his.

"Oh, Oliver! Not Peter Fish! That's the best thing that has happened yet," and her face instantly assumed a more serious expression. "I know the girl, — she will be an easy subject; she's exactly your type. How do you know?"

"Just saw John Snedecor in answer to a letter he wrote me. Fish has bought the 'Woman in Black.' He's delighted with it."

"Why, I thought it belonged to the countess."

"So it did. She sold it."

"Sold it!"

"Yes. Does it surprise you?"

"No; I can't say that it does. I am glad, though, that it will stay in the country. It 's by far the best thing you or anybody else has done this season. I was afraid she would take it back with her. Poor woman! she has had a hard life, and it does n't seem to get any better, from what I hear."

"You know the original, then, my dear?" asked Richard, holding out his second cup of tea for another lump of sugar, which Margaret, in her excitement, had forgotten. He and Nathan had listened with the keenest interest to the reading of John Grant's letter and to the discussion that had followed.

"I know *of* her," answered Margaret as she dropped it in; "and she knows me, but I 've never met her. She 's a Pole, and something of a painter, too. She studied in the same atelier where I was, but that was before I went to Paris. Her husband became mixed up in some political conspiracy and was sent to Siberia, and she was put across the frontier that same night. She is very popular in Paris, — they all like

her, especially the painters. There is nothing against her except her poverty." There could be nothing against any woman in Margaret's eyes. "But for her jewels she would have had as hard a time to get on as the rest of us. Now and then she parts with one of her pearls, and between times she teaches music. You must see the picture Oliver painted of her — it will delight you."

"Oh, but I have!" exclaimed Richard, laying down his cup. "We looked at it as we came up. It is really a great picture. He tells me it is the work of two hours, and under gaslight."

"No, not altogether, father. I had a few hours on it the next day," interrupted Oliver.

"Strong, is n't it?" continued Margaret, without noticing Oliver's explanation. "It is really better in many ways than the girl in the tam-o'-shanter cap, the one he painted of me. That had some of Lely's qualities about it, especially in the flesh tones. He always tells me the inspiration to paint it came from an old picture belonging to his uncle. You know that, of course?" and she laid a thin sandwich on Nathan's plate.

"You mean Tilghman's Lely — the one in his house in Kennedy Square? Oh," said Richard,

lifting his fingers in appreciation, "I know every line of it. It is one of the best Lelys I ever saw, and to me the gem of Tilghman's collection."

"Yes; so Ollie tells me," continued Margaret. "Now this picture of the countess is to me very much more in Velasquez's method than in Lely's. Broader and stronger, and with a surer touch. I have always told Ollie he was right to give up landscapes. These two pictures show it. There is really, Mr. Horn, no one on this side of the water who is doing exactly what Oliver is." She spoke as if she was discussing Page, Huntington, or Elliott, or any other painter of the day, not as if it was her lover. "Did you notice how the lace was brushed in, and all that work about the throat — especially the shadow tones?"

She treated Richard precisely as if he was one of the guild. His criticisms of her own work — for he had insisted on seeing her latest picture, and had even been more enthusiastic over it than he had been over Oliver's — and his instant appreciation of the Lambinet convinced her, even before he had finished the tour of the room, that the quaint old gentleman was as much at home in her atmosphere as he was in that of his shop at home, discussing scientific problems with some *savant*.

"I did, my dear. It is quite as you say," answered Richard with great earnestness. "This 'Woman in Black,' as he calls it, is painted not only with sureness and with an intimate knowledge of the textures, but it seems to me he has the faculty of expressing with each stroke of his brush, as an engraver does with his burin, the rounds and hollows of his surfaces. And to think, too, my dear," he continued, "that most of it was done at night! The color tones, you know," and his manner changed, and a more thoughtful expression came into his face, — the scientist was speaking now, — "are most difficult to manage at night. The colors of the spectrum undergo some very curious changes under artificial light, especially from a gas consuming as much carbon as our common carburetted hydrogen. The greens, owing to the absorption of the yellow rays, become the brighter, and the orange and red tones, from the same reason, the more intense, while the paler violets and, in fact, all the tertiaries of a bluish cast lose" —

He stopped, as he caught a puzzled expression on her face. "Oh, what a dreadful person I am!" he exclaimed, rising from his seat. "It is quite inexcusable in me. Please forgive me, my dear, — I was really thinking aloud. Such

ponderous learned words should be kept out of this delightful abode of the Muses, and then, I assure you, I really know so little about it, and you know so much!" And he laughed softly, and made a little bow as a further apology.

"No, I don't know one thing about it, nor does any other painter I know," she laughed, blowing out the alcohol lamp, "not quite in the same way. And if I did I should want you to come every day and bring Mr. Gill with you to tell me about it." Whereupon Nathan, replying that nothing would give him more pleasure (he had been silent most of the time — somehow no one expected him to talk much when Richard was present), struggled to his feet at an almost imperceptible sign from the inventor, who suddenly remembered that his capitalists were waiting for him, pulled his old cloak about his shoulders, and with Richard leading the way, they all four moved out into the hall and stood in the open doorway.

When they reached the top stair outside the studio door, Richard stopped, took both of Margaret's hands in his, and said, in his kindest voice and in his gravest and most thoughtful manner, as he looked down into her face, —

"My dear Miss Grant, may I tell you that I have to-day found in you the realization of one

of my day-dreams? And will you forgive an old man when he says how proud it makes him to know a woman who is brave enough to live the life you do? You are the forerunner of a great movement, my dear, the mother of a new guild. It is a grand and noble thing for a woman to sustain herself with work that she loves," and the dear old gentleman, lifting his hat with the air of a courtier, betook himself downstairs, followed by Nathan, bowing as he went.

No wonder he rejoiced! Most of the dreams of his younger days were coming true. And now this woman — the beginning of a new era — the opening out of a new civilization! And ahead of it a National Art that the world would one day recognize!

He tried to express his delight to Oliver, and turned to find him, but Oliver was not beside him, nor did he join his father for five minutes at least. That young gentleman — just as Richard and Nathan had reached the *bottom* of the second flight of stairs — had suddenly remembered something of the utmost importance which he had left in the *inner* room, and which he could not possibly find until Madge, waiting by the banister, had gone back to help him look for it, and not then, until Mrs. Mulligan had left

them both and shut the kitchen door behind her. Yes, it was quite five minutes, or more, before Oliver clattered downstairs after his guests, stopping but once to look up through the banisters into Margaret's eyes, — she was leaning over for the purpose, — his open hand held up toward her as a sign that it was always at her command.

XXIII

MR. MUNSON'S LOST FOIL

FOR a quiet, orderly, well behaved, and most dignified street, Tenth Street, at seven o'clock one April night was disgracing itself in a way that must have shocked its inhabitants. Cabs driving like mad were rattling over the cobbles, making their way toward the old Studio Building. Policemen were shouting to the drivers to keep in line. Small boys were darting in and out, peering into the cab windows and calling out to their fellows, "Ki, Jimmy! See de Ingin wid de fedder duster on his head!" or "Look at de pill in de yaller shirt! My eye, ain't he a honey-cooler!"

At the entrance of the building, just inside the door, where the crowd was thickest, stood two men in armor with visors down, — stood so still that the boys and bystanders thought they had been borrowed from some bric-à-brac shop until, in an unguarded moment, one plumed knight rested his tired leg with a rattling noise that sounded like a tin-pedler shifting his pack

or the adjustment of a length of stovepipe. Behind the speechless sentinels, leading into the narrow corridor, stretched a red carpet, bordered by rows of palms and evergreens and hung about with Chinese lanterns.

At the end of this carpet opened a door that looked into a banquet hall as rich in color and as sumptuous in its interior fittings as an audience chamber of the Doges at a time when Venice ruled the world. The walls were draped with Venetian silks and Spanish velvets, against which were placed Moorish plaques, Dutch brass sconces holding clusters of candles, barbaric spears, bits of armor, pairs of fencing foils, old cabinets, and low, luxurious divans. Thrust up into the skylight, its gaff festooned with trawl-nets, drooped a huge sloop's sail, its graceful folds breaking the square lines of the ceiling; and all about, suspended on long filigree chains, swung old church lamps of brass or silver, burning ruby tapers.

In the centre of this glow of color stood a round table, its top covered with a white cloth, and laid with covers for fifty guests. On this were placed, in orderly confusion, great masses of flowers heaped up in rare porcelain vases; silver candelabra bearing lighted candles; old Antwerp brass holding bon-bons and sweets;

Venetian flagons filled with rare wines ; Chinese and Japanese curios doing service as ash-receivers and match safes; Delft platters for choice dishes; besides Flemish mugs, Bavarian glasses, George III. silver, and the like.

At the head of this sumptuous board was placed a chair of state, upholstered in red velvet, studded with brass rosettes, the corners of its high back surmounted by two upright gilt ornaments. This was to hold the Master of the Feast, the presiding officer who was to govern the merry spirits during the hours of the revel. In front of this royal chair was a huge stone mug crowned with laurel. This was guarded by two ebony figures, armed with drawn scimitars, which stood at each side of the throne-seat. From these guards of honor radiated two half circles of lesser chairs, one for each guest, of all patterns and periods : old Spanish altar seats in velvet, Dutch chairs in leather, Italian chairs in mother-of-pearl and ivory, — all armless and quite low, so low that the costumed slaves, who were to wait on the royal assembly, could serve the courses without having to reach over the backs of the guests.

Moving about the room, rearranging the curios on the cabinets, adding a bit of porcelain to the collection on the table, shifting the lights for bet-

ter effect, lounging on the wide divans, or massed about the doorway welcoming the new arrivals as they entered, were Italian nobles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, costumed with every detail correct, even to the jewelled daggers that hung at their sides, all genuine and of the period ; cardinals in red hats and wonderful church robes, the candle grease of the altar still clinging to their skirts ; Spanish grandees in velvet and brocade ; Indian rajahs in baggy silk trousers and embroidered waistcoats, with Kohinoors flashing from their turbans — not genuine this time, but brilliant all the same ; Shakespeares, Dantes (one of each), besides courtiers, nobles, gallants, and gentry of various climes and periods.

All this splendor of appointment, all these shaded candles, hanging lamps, Venetian glass, antique furniture, rich costumes, Japanese curios, and assorted bric-à-brac, were gathered together and arranged thus sumptuously to add charm and lustre to a banquet given by the Stone Mugs to those of their friends most distinguished in their several professions of art, literature, and music.

Indeed, any banquet the club gave was sure to be as unique as it was artistic.

Sometimes it would be held in the hold of an

abandoned vessel left high and dry on a lonely beach, which, under the deft touches of the artists of the club, would be transformed in a night to the cabin of a buccaneer filled with the loot of a treasure ship. Sometimes a canal-boat, which the week before had been loaded with lime or potatoes, would be scoured out with a fire-hose, its deck roofed with awnings and hung with lanterns, its hatches lined with palms, and in the hold below a table spread of such surprising beauty, and in an interior so gorgeous in its appointments, that each guest, as he descended the carpeted staircase leading from the deck above to the carpeted keelson below, would rub his eyes, wondering whether he had not been asleep, and had suddenly awakened aboard Cleopatra's barge.

Again, the club would hold a Roman feast in one of Solari's upstairs rooms, — the successor to Riley's of the old days, — each man speaking ancient Latin with Tenth Street terminals, the servants dressed in tunics and sandals, and the members in togas. Or they would make a descent at midnight on Fulton Market and have their tomcods scooped from the fish-boxes alive and broiled to their liking while they waited ; or they would take possession of Brown's or Farrish's for mugs of ale and English chops. But

it was always one so different from any other function of its class that it formed the topic of the studios for weeks thereafter.

To-night it was the humor of the club to reproduce as closely as possible, with the limited means at their disposal, — for none of the Stone Mugs were rolling in wealth, nor did these functions require it, — some one of the great banquets of former times, not to be historically or chronologically correct, but to express the artistic atmosphere of such an occasion.

That there were certain unavoidable and easily detected shams under all this glamour of color and form did not lessen the charm of the present function.

Everybody, of course, knew before the evening was over, or could have found out had he tried, that the two knights in armor who guarded the sidewalk entrance to this royal chamber, and who had been the target of the street rats until they took their places at the inside door, were respectively Mr. Patrick McGinnis, who tended the furnace in the basement of the Tenth Street Studio Building, stripped for the occasion down to his red flannels, and Signore Luigi Bennelli, his Italian assistant.

A closer inspection of the two ebony blackamoors, with drawn scimitars, who guarded the

royal chair at the head of the table, would have revealed the fact that they were not made of ebony at all, but of veritable flesh and blood, — the blackamoor on the right being none other than Black Sam, the bootblack who shined shoes on the corner of the avenue, and his bloodthirsty pal on the left the kinky-haired porter who served the grocer next door; the only *honest* thing about either of them, to quote Waller, being the artistic clothes that they stood in.

Further investigation would have shown that every one of the wonderful things that made glad and glorious the big square room on the ground floor of the building, from the brass sconces on the walls to the hanging church lamps, with everything that their lights fell upon, had been gathered up that same morning from the several homes and studios of the members by old black Jerry, the official carman of the Academy, and had been dumped in an indiscriminate heap on the floor of the banquet hall, where they had been disentangled and arranged by half a dozen painters of the club; that the table and tablecloth had been borrowed from Solari's; that the very rare and fragrant old Chianti, the club's private stock, was from Solari's own cellars *via* Duncan's, the grocer; and

that the dinner itself was cooked and served by that distinguished boniface himself, assisted by half a dozen of his own waiters, each one wearing an original Malay costume selected from Stedman's collection, and used by him in his great picture of the Sepoy mutiny.

Moreover there was not the slightest doubt that the "Ingin," who was now bowing so gravely to the master of ceremonies, was no other than the distinguished Mr. Thomas Brandon Waller himself, "N. A., Knight of the Legion of Honor, Pupil of Piloty, etc., etc.;" that the high-class mandarin in the sacred yellow robe and peacock feather who accompanied him was Crug, the 'cellist; that the bald-headed gentleman with the pointed beard, who looked the exact presentment of the divine William, was Munson; and that the gay young gallant in the Spanish costume was none other than our Oliver. The other nobles, cavaliers, and hidalgos were the less known members of the club, who, in their desire to make the occasion a success, had fitted themselves to their costumes instead of attempting to fit the costumes to themselves, with the difference that each man not only looked the character he assumed, but assumed the character he looked.

But no one, even the most knowing, — no

student of costumes, no reader of faces, no discerner of character, no acute observer of manners and times, — in glancing over the motley company would have thought for one instant that, in all this atmosphere of real unrealism, the two old gentlemen who had just entered leaning on Oliver's arm — one in a brown coat with high velvet collar and fluffy silk scarf, and the other in a long penwiper cloak which at the moment was slipping from his shoulders — were genuine specimens of the period of to-day without a touch of make-up about them ; that their old-time manners, even to the quaint bows they both gave the master of ceremonies, as they entered the royal chamber, were their very own, part of their daily equipment; and that nothing in the gorgeous banquet hall, from the jewelled rapier belted to Oliver's side, and which had once graced the collection of a prince, down to the priceless bit of satsuma set out on the table and now stuffed full of cigarettes (the bit could be traced back to the Ming dynasty), were any more *veritable* or genuine, or any more representative of the best their periods afforded than these two quaint old gentlemen from Kennedy Square.

Had there been any doubt in the minds of any such wiseacre, either regarding their authen-

ticity or their quality, he had only to listen to Oliver's presentation of his father and friend, and to hear Richard say, in his most courteous manner and in his most winning voice, —

"I have never been more honored, sir. It was more than kind of you to wish me to come. My only regret is that I am not your age, or I would certainly have appeared in a costume more befitting the occasion. I have never dreamed of so beautiful a place."

Or to see him lift his hand in astonishment as he swept his eye over the room, his arm still resting on the velvet sleeve of Oliver's doublet, and hear him add, in a half whisper, —

"Wonderful! Wonderful! Such harmony of color; such an exquisite light! I am amazed at the splendor of it all. What Aladdin among you, my son, held the lamp that evoked all this beauty?"

Or still more convincing would it have been had he watched him moving about the room, shaking every man's hand in turn, Oliver mentioning their real names and their several qualifications, and afterward the characters they assumed, and Richard commenting on each profession in a way quite his own.

"A musician, sir," he would have heard him exclaim as he grasped Simmons's hand, over

which hung a fall of antique lace; "I have loved music all my days. It is an additional bond between us, sir. And the costume is quite in keeping with your art. How delightful it would be, my dear sir, if we could discard forever the sombre clothes of our day and go back to the velvets and silks of the past."

"Mr. Stedman, did you say, my son?" and he turned to Oliver. "You have certainly mentioned this gentleman's name to me before. If I do not mistake, he is one of your very old friends. There is no need of your telling me that you are *Lorenzo*. I can quite understand now why *Jessica* lost her heart."

Or to see him turn to Jack Bedford with "You don't tell me so! Mr. John Bedford, did you say, Oliver? Ah, but we should not be strangers, sir. If I am right, you are a fellow townsman of ours, and have already distinguished yourself in your profession. Your costume is especially becoming to you, sir. What discernment you have shown! Permit me to say, that with you the old adage must be reversed — this time the man makes the clothes."

The same adage could really have been applied to this old gentleman's own dress, had he but only known it. He had not altered it in twenty years, even after it had become a

matter of comment among his neighbors in Kennedy Square.

"I always associate one's clothes with one's manners," he would say, with a smile. "If they are good, and suited to the occasion, best not change them." Nathan was of the same mind. The wide hat, long, evenly parted hair, and penwiper cloak could be traced to these same old-fashioned ideas. These idiosyncrasies excited no comment so far as Nathan was concerned. He was always looked upon as belonging to some antediluvian period, but with a progressive man like Richard the case, his neighbors thought, might have been different.

As Richard moved about the room, saluting each one in turn, the men in and out of costume — the guests were in evening dress — looked at each other and smiled at the old gentleman's quaint ways, but the old gentleman, with the same ease of manner and speech, continued on quite around the table, followed closely by Nathan, who limited his salutations to a timid shake of the fingers and the leaving of some word of praise or quaint greeting, which many of them remember even to this day.

These introductions over, — Oliver had arrived on the minute, — the ceremony of seating the guests was at once begun. This ceremony

was one of great dignity, the two men-at-arms escorting the Master of the Feast, the Most High Pan-Jam, Frederico Stono, N. A., to his Royal Chair, guarded by the immovable blackamoors,— the members and guests standing until His Royal Highness had taken his seat, and then dropping into their own. When every one was in his place Richard found himself, to his delight, on the right of Fred and next to Nathan and Oliver, an honor accorded to him because of his age and relationship to one of the most popular members of the club, and not because of his genius and attainments, these latter attributes being as yet unknown quantities in that atmosphere. The two thus seated together under the especial care of Oliver, a fact which relieved the master of ceremonies of any further anxiety on their account, were to a certain extent left to themselves, the table being too large for general conversation except with one's neighbors.

The seat in which he had been placed exactly suited Richard's frame of mind. With an occasional word to Fred, he sat quite still, talking now and then in low tones to Nathan. his eyes taking in every detail of the strange scene.

While Nathan saw only the color and beauty

of it all, Richard's keener mind was analyzing the causes that had led up to such a gathering, and the skill and taste with which the banquet had been carried out. He felt assured that the men who could idle so luxuriously, and whose technical knowledge had perfected the artistic effects about him, could also work at their several professions with equal results. He was glad that Oliver had been found worthy enough to be admitted to such a circle. He loved, too, to hear his son's voice and watch the impression his words made on the room. As the evening wore on, and he listened to his banter, or caught the point of the jests that Oliver parried and heard his merry laugh, he would slip his hand under the table and pat his boy's knee with loving taps of admiration, prouder of him than ever. His own pleasures so absorbed him that he continued to sit almost silent, except for a word now and then to Nathan or a monosyllable to Fred.

The guests who were near enough to observe the visitors closely, soon began to look upon Richard and Nathan as a couple of quaint, harmless, exceedingly well-bred old gentlemen, rather provincial in appearance and a little stilted in their manners, who, before the evening was over, would perhaps become tired of the gayety,

ask to be excused, and betake themselves to bed. All of which would be an eminently proper proceeding in view of their extreme age and general infirmities, old gentlemen of threescore years and over appearing more or less decrepit to athletes of twenty and five.

Waller was the only man who really seemed to take either of them seriously. After a critical examination of Richard's head in clear relief under the soft light of the candles, he leaned over to Stedman and said in a half whisper, nodding toward Richard, —

"Stedman, old man, take that in for a minute. Strong, is n't it? Would n't you like to paint him as a blessed old Cardinal in a red gown? See how fine the nose is, and the forehead. Best head I 've seen anywhere. Something in that old fellow."

The dinner went on. The Malays in scarlet and yellow served the dishes and poured the wine with noiseless regularity. The men-at-arms at each side of the door rested their legs. The two blackamoors, guarding the High Pan-Jam's chair, and who had been promised double pay if they kept still during the entire evening, had not so far winked an eyelid. Now and then a burst of laughter would start from one end of the table, leap from chair to chair, and end in a

deafening roar in which the whole room joined. Each man was at his best. Fred, with entire gravity, and with his sternest and most High Pan-Jam expression, told, just after the fish was served, a story of a negro cook at a camp, so true to life and in so perfect a dialect that the right-hand blackamoor doubled himself up like a jack-knife, much to the astonishment of those on the far side of the big round table, who up to that moment had firmly believed them to be studio properties with ebony heads screwed on bodies of iron wire, the whole stuffed with curled hair. Bianchi, who had come in late, clothed in a burgomaster's costume and the identical ruff that Oliver had expected to paint him in, the night when the countess took his place, was called to account for piecing out his dress with a pair of breeches a century behind his coat and hat, and had his voice drowned in a roar of protests before he could explain.

Batterson, the big baritone of the club, Batterson with the resonant voice, surpassed all his former efforts by singing, when the cheese and salads were served, a Bedouin love song, with such power and pathos and to the accompaniment of a native instrument so skilfully handled that the room rose to its feet, waving napkins, and the great Carvalho, the famous tenor, a

guest of Crug's, — each member could invite one guest, — who was singing that week at the Academy of Music, left his seat and, circling the table, threw his arms about the singer in undisguised admiration.

When the cigars and *liqueurs* had been passed around — these last were poured from bubble-blown decanters and drunk from the little cups flecked with gold that Munson had found in an old shop in Ravenna — the chairs were wheeled about or pushed back, and the members and guests rose from the table and drifted to the divans lining the walls, or threw themselves into the easy-chairs that were being brought from the corners by the waiters. The piano, with the assistance of the two now crestfallen and disappointed blackamoors, who, Eurydice-like, had listened and lost, was pushed from its place against the wall; Crug's 'cello was stripped of its green baize bag, and Simmons's violin-case opened and his Stradivarius placed beside it. The big table, bearing the wreck of the feast, more captivating even in its delightful disorder than it had been in its orderly confusion, was then, with the combined help of all the Malays, moved gently back against the wall, so as to widen the space around the piano, its *débris* left undisturbed by special orders from the Royal

Chair, the rattling of dishes while their fun was in progress being one of the things which the club would not tolerate.

While all this rearranging of the banquet hall was going on, Simmons was busying himself putting a new bridge under the strings of his violin, tightening its bow, and testing the condition of his instrument by that see-saw, harum-scarum flourish so common to all virtuosos — no function of the club was ever complete without music. The men meanwhile settled themselves comfortably in their seats, some occupying their old chairs, others taking possession of the divans, — the gay costumes of the members and the black coats and white shirt fronts of the guests in high relief against the wrecked dinner-table, presenting a picture as rich in color as it was strong in contrast.

What is so significant, by the way, or so picturesque, as a dinner-table wrecked by good cheer and hospitality? The stranded, crumpled napkins; the bunching together of half and wholly emptied glasses, each one marking a period of content; the low candles, with half dried tears still streaming down their cheeks (tears of laughter, of course); the charming disorder of cups on plates and the piling up of dishes one on the other — all such a protest against the

formality of the beginning! and all so suggestive of the lavish kindness of the host! A wonderful object-lesson is a wrecked dinner-table, if one cares to study it.

Silence now fell upon the room, the slightest noise when Simmons played being an unpardonable sin. The waiters were ordered either to become part of the wall decoration or to betake themselves to the outside hall, or the infernal regions, a suggestion of Waller's when one of them rattled some glasses he was carrying on a tray.

Simmons tucked a handkerchief in the band of his collar, balanced his bow for an instant, looked around the room, and asked, in a modest, obliging way, —

"What shall it be, fellows?"

"Better give us Bach. The aria on the G strings," answered Waller.

"No, Chopin!" cried Fred.

"No, you wooden-head, Bach's aria," whispered Waller. "Don't you know that is the best thing he does?"

"Bach it is, then," answered Simmons, tucking his instrument under his chin.

As the music filled the room, Richard settled himself on one of the large divans between Nathan and Oliver, his head lying back on the

cushions, his eyes half closed. If the table, with its circle of thoughtful and merry faces, had set his brain to work, the tones of Simmons's violin had now stirred his very soul. Music was the one thing in the world he could not resist.

He had never heard the aria better played. He had no idea that any one since Ole Bull's time could play it so well. Really, the surprises of this wonderful city were becoming greater to him every hour. Nathan, too, had caught the infection as he sat with his body bent foward, his head on one side, listening intently.

When the last note of Simmons's violin had ceased vibrating, Richard sprang to his feet with all the buoyancy of a boy and grasped the musician by the hand.

"My dear sir, you really astound me! Your tone is most exquisite, and I must also thank you for the rendering. It is one quite new to me. Ole Bull played it, you remember — excuse me," and he picked up Simmons's violin where he had laid it on the piano, tucked it under his chin, and there vibrated through the room half a dozen quivering notes, so clear and sweet that all eyes were instantly directed toward the quaint old gentleman, who still stood with uplifted bow, the violin in his hand.

"Where the devil did he learn to play like that?" said one member to another. "Why, I thought he was an inventor."

"Keep your toes in your pumps, gentlemen," said Waller under his breath to some men beside him, as he sat hunched up in the depths of an old Spanish armchair. He had not taken his eyes from Richard while the music went on. "We 're not half through with this old fellow. One thing I 've found out, anyhow — that 's where this beggar Horn got his voice."

Simmons was not so astounded; if he were he did not show it. He had recognized the touch of a musician in the very first note that came from the strings, just as the painters of the club had recognized the artist in the first line of the countess's brush.

"Yes, you 're right, Mr. Horn," said Simmons, as Richard returned him the instrument. "Now I come to think of it, I do remember having heard Ole Bull phrase it in that way you have. Stop a moment; take my violin again and play the air. There 's another instrument here which I can use. I brought it for one of my orchestra, but he has not turned up yet," and he opened a cabinet behind him and took out a violin and bow.

Richard laughed as he again picked up Sim-

mons's instrument from the piano where he had laid it.

"What an extraordinary place this is!" he said as he adjusted the maestro's violin to his chin. "It fills me with wonder. Everything you want seems to be within reach of your hand. You take a bare room and transform it into a dream of beauty; you touch a spring in a sixteenth century cabinet, and out comes a violin. Marvellous! Marvellous!" and he sounded the strings with his bow. "And a wonderful instrument too," he continued, as he tightened one of its strings, his acute ear having detected a slight inaccuracy of pitch.

"I'm all ready, Mr. Simmons; now, if you please."

If the club and its guests had forgotten the old gentleman an hour before, the old gentleman had now quite forgotten them.

He played simply and easily, Simmons joining in, picking out the accompaniment, entirely unaware that anybody was listening, as unaware as he would have been had only the white-haired mistress been present, and perhaps Malachi stepping noiselessly in and out. When he ceased, and the audience had broken out into exclamations of delight, he looked about him as if surprised, and then, suddenly remembering the

cause of it all, said, in a low, gentle voice, and with a pleasant smile, "I don't wonder you 're delighted, gentlemen. It is to me the most divine of all his creations. There is only one Bach." That his hand had held the bow and that the merit of its expression lay with him, never seemed to have entered his head.

When the applause had died out, and Oliver with the others had crowded around his father to congratulate him, the young fellow's eyes fell upon Nathan, who was still sitting on the long divan, his head resting against the wall, his trembling legs crossed one over the other, the thin hands in his lap. Richard's skill was a never-ending delight to Nathan, and he had not lost a note that his bow had called out. The flute-player had kept so quiet since the music had begun, and had become so much a part of the decorations, — like one of the old chairs with its arms held out, or a white-faced bust staring from out a dark corner, or some portrait that looked down from the tapestries and held its peace, — that almost every one had forgotten his presence.

The attitude of the old man, always a pathetic one, brought back to Oliver's mind some memory from out his boyhood days. Suddenly a forgotten strain from Nathan's flute floated

through his brain, some strain that had vibrated through the old rooms in Kennedy Square. Springing to his feet and tiptoeing to the door, he passed between the two men in armor, — rather tired knights by this time, but still on duty, — ran down the carpeted hall between the lines of palms and up one flight of stairs. Then came a series of low knocks. A few minutes later he bounded in again, his rapier in his hand to give his legs freer play.

"I rapped up Mitchell, who 's sick in his studio upstairs, and got his flute," he whispered to Waller. "If you think my father can play you should hear Uncle Nat Gill," and he walked toward Nathan, the flute held out toward him.

The old gentleman woke to consciousness at the sight of the instrument, and a slight flush overspread his face.

"Oh, Oliver! Really, gentlemen — I — of course, I love the instrument, but here among you all" — and he looked up in a helpless way.

"No, no, Uncle Nat," cried Oliver, pressing the flute into Nathan's hand. "We won't take any excuse. There is no one in my town, gentlemen," and he faced the others, "who can play as he does. Please, Uncle Nat — just for me; it 's so long since I heard you play," and

he caught hold of Nathan's arm to lift him to his feet.

"You are quite right, my son," cried Richard, "and I will play his accompaniment."

Oliver's announcement and Richard's indorsement caused a stir as great as Richard's own performance. A certain curiosity took possession of the room, quite distinct from the spirit of merriment which had characterized it before. Many of the men now left their seats and began crowding about the piano, — red cardinals, cavaliers, nobles, and black-coated guests looking over each other's shoulders. Everybody was getting more and more mystified.

"Really, Fred," whispered Waller, who still sat quietly watching the two visitors, — he had not taken his eyes from them since Richard in his enthusiasm sprang forward to grasp Simmons's hand, — "this is the most ridiculous thing I ever saw in my life. First comes this fossil thoroughbred who outplays Simmons, and now comes this old nut-cracker with his white tow-hair sticking out in two straight mops, who is going to play the flute! What in thunder is coming next? Pretty soon one of them will be pulling rabbits out of somebody's ears, or rubbing gold watches into canary birds."

Nathan took the flute from Oliver's out-

stretched hand, bowed in a timid way like a schoolboy about to speak a piece, turned it over carefully, tried the silver keys to see that they responded easily to the pressure of his fingers, and raised it to his lips. Richard picked up the violin and whispered to Munson, with whom he had been talking, — the one member who could play the piano as well as he could paint or fence, — who nodded his head in assent.

Then, with Richard leading, the four — one of the guests, a 'cellist of distinction, took Max Unger's place — began Max's arrangement of the overture to "Fidelio;" the one Richard and Nathan had played so often together in the old parlor in Kennedy Square, with Miss Clendenning and Unger, an arrangement which had now become known to most musical amateurs.

There is not a man yet alive who has forgotten the tones of Nathan's flute as they soared that night through the clouds of tobacco smoke that filled the great banquet hall. Every shade and gradation of tone was a delight,— now soft as the cooing of doves, now low as the music of a brook rippling over the shallows, and again swelling into song like a chorus of birds rejoicing in the coming of spring.

Not until the voice in the slender instrument had become silent and the last note of Richard's

bow had ceased reverberating — not, in fact, until both men had laid down their instruments, and had turned from the piano — did the room seem to recover from the spell that had bound it. Even then there was no applause, no clapping of hands nor stamping of feet. There followed, from members and guests alike, only a deep, pent-up sigh and a long breath of relief, as if from a strain unbearable. Simmons, who had sat with his head buried in his hands, gave no other sign of his approval than by rising from his chair, taking Nathan's thin hand in his own and grasping it tightly, without a word. Stedman blurted out, in a low voice to himself, "My God! Who ever heard anything like that?" and remained fixed to his seat. As for Richard and Nathan, they resumed their places on the divan as men who had read a message not their own to willing ears.

Another, and quite a different mood now took possession of the room. Somehow the mellow tones of Nathan's flute had silenced the spirit of the rollicking buffoonery which had pervaded the evening.

The black-coated guests, with superlative praise of the good time they had had, and with renewed thanks for the privilege, began to bid Fred, the Master of Ceremonies, good-night.

Soon only the costumed members, with Richard and Nathan, were left. So far from being tired out with the night's diversion, these two old gentlemen seemed to have just wakened up.

Those remaining drew their chairs together, lighted fresh cigars, and sat down to talk over the events of the evening. Richard related an anecdote of Macready when playing the part of Hamlet; Stedman told of the graceful manner in which Booth, a few months before, in the same part, had handed the flageolet to the musicians, and the way the words fell from his lips, "You would play upon me;" Oliver, addressing his words rather to his father than to the room, — acting the scene as he talked, and in his tight-fitting doublet looking not unlike the tragedian himself, — cut in with a description of the great tragedian's first night at the Winter Garden after his seclusion — a night when the whole house rose to greet their favorite and cheered and roared and pounded everything within reach of their hands and feet for twenty minutes, while Booth stood with trembling knees, the tears rolling down his cheeks. Munson remarked with some feeling — he was an intimate friend of the actor — that he remembered the night perfectly, having sat behind Oliver, and that Booth was not only the most

accomplished actor but the best swordsman ever seen on the American or any other stage. Munson was an expert fencer himself, as was evidenced by the scar on his left cheek, received when he was a student at Heidelberg, and so thought himself competent to judge.

While Munson was speaking the great Waller had risen from his seat for the first time, gathered his gorgeous raiment closer about him, crossed the room, and now stood filling a thin glass from a Venetian flagon that graced the demoralized table.

"Booth 's a swordsman, is he?" he said, pushing back his turban from his forehead, and walking toward Munson, glass in hand, his baggy trousers and tunic making him look twice his regular size. "You know as much about fencing, Munson, as you do about the lost tribes of Israel. Booth handles his foil as a policeman does a rattan cane in the pit of the Bowery. Forrest is the only man in this country who can handle a blade."

"I do, do I?" cried Munson, springing to his feet and unhooking a pair of foils decorating the wall. "Stop where you are, you caricature of Nana Sahib, or I 'll run you through the body and pin you to the wall like a beetle, where you can kick to your heart's content. Here,

catch this," and he tossed one of the foils to Waller.

"A ring! A ring!" cried the men, with one of those sudden inspirations that often swept over them, jumping from their seats and pushing back the chairs and music-racks to give the contestants room.

Waller laid down his wineglass, slipped off his turban and gold embroidered tunic with great deliberation, threw them over to Oliver, who caught them in his arms, tightened his sash, grasped the foil in his fat hand, and with great gravity made a savage lunge at the counterfeit presentment of William Shakespeare, who parried his blow without moving from where he stood. Thereupon the lithe, well-built young fellow teetered his foil in the air, and with great nicety pinked his fat antagonist in the stomach, selecting a gilt band just above his sash as the point of contact.

A mock battle now ensued, Munson chasing Waller about the room, the members roaring with laughter, Richard, with Oliver's assistance having mounted the divan to see the better, clapping his hands like any boy and shouting, "Bravo! Bravo! Now the uppercut, now the thrust! Ah, well done! Capital! Capital!"

Oliver listened in wonder to the strange expressions that dropped from his father's lips. Up to that moment he had never known that the old gentleman had ever touched a foil in his life.

The next instant Richard was on the floor again, commiserating with Waller, who was out of Munson's reach and out of breath with laughter, and congratulating Munson on his skill as a swordsman.

"I only noticed one flaw, my dear Mr. Munson, in your handling," he cried, with a graceful wave of the hand, "and that may be due to your more modern way of fencing. Pardon me," and he picked up Waller's foil where he had dropped it; and the fine wrist with the nimble fingers, that had served him so well all his days, closed over the handle of the foil. "The thrust in the old days was made *so*. You, I think, made it *so*," and two flashes at different angles gleamed in the candle-light.

Munson, as if to humor the old gentleman, threw up his foil, made a pass or two, and, to his intense astonishment, received the button of Richard's foil on his black velvet jacket and within an inch of his heart.

Everybody on the floor at once circled about the contestants. The spectacle of an old gen-

tleman in a snuff-colored coat and high collar, having a bout with a short gentleman in shorter velvet trunks, silk hose, and steel buckles, was one too droll and too exhilarating to lose, — anachronistic it was, yet quite in keeping with the surroundings. More exhilarating still was the extreme punctiliousness with which the old gentleman raised the handle of his foil to his chin after he had made his point, and saluted his antagonist as if he had been some knight of King Arthur's table.

Still more fascinating was the way in which the younger man settled down to work, his brow knit, his lips tightly closed, the members widening out to give them room, Oliver and Nathan cheering the loudest of them all as Richard's foil flashed in the air, parrying, receiving, now up, now down, his right foot edging closer, his dear old head bent low, his deep eyes fixed on his young antagonist, until, with a quick thrust of his arm and a sudden upward twist of his hand, he wrenched Munson's foil from his grasp and sent it flying across the room.

Best of all was the joyful yet apologetic way with which Richard sprang forward and held out his hand to Munson, crying out, —

"A fluke, my dear Mr. Munson; quite a fluke, I assure you. Pray forgive me. A mere

lucky accident. My old fencing master, Martini, taught me that trick. I thought I had quite forgotten it. Just think ! it is forty years since I have had a foil in my hands," and, laughing like a boy he crossed the room, picked up the foil, and, bowing low, handed it to the crestfallen man with the air of a gallant.

Half the club, costumed as they were, — it was now after midnight, and there were but few people in the streets, — escorted the two old men back to their hotel. Munson walked beside Richard ; Waller, his flowing skirts tucked up inside his overcoat, stepped on the right of Nathan ; Oliver, Fred, and the others followed behind, the hubbub of their talk filling the night : even when they reached the side door of the hotel and rang up the night porter, they must still stand on the sidewalk listening to Richard's account of the way the young gallants were brought up in his day, of the bouts with the foils, and of the duels which were fought, before they were willing to take their leave.

When the last good-bys had been given, and Oliver had waved his rapier from the doorstep as a final farewell to his fellow members before he saw his father upstairs to bed, and the

delighted escort had turned on their heels to retrace their steps up Broadway, Waller slipped his arm into Munson's, and said, in his most thoughtful tone, one entirely free from cynicism or badinage, —

"What a lovely pair of old duffers! We talk about Bohemia, Munson, and think we've got it, but we have n't. Our kind is a cheap veneer glued to commonplace pine. Their kind is old mahogany, solid all the way through — fine grain, high polish, and no knots. I only wish they lived here."

XXIV

IN THE TWILIGHT

EACH day Margaret's heart warmed more and more to Richard. He not only called out in her a tenderness and veneration for his age and attainments which her own father had never permitted her to express, but his personality realized for her an ideal which, until she knew him, she had despaired of ever finding. While his courtesy, his old-time manners, his quaintness of speech and dress captivated her imagination, his perfect and unfailing sympathy and constant kindness completely won her heart. There was, too, now and then, a peculiar tone in his voice which would bring the tears to her eyes without her knowing why, until her mind would recall some blunt, outspoken speech of her dead father's in answer to the very sentiments she was then expressing to Richard, who received them as a matter of course, — a remembrance which always caused a tightening about her heart.

Sometimes the inventor would sit for her

while she sketched his head in different lights, he watching her work, interested in every stroke, every bit of composition. She loved to have him beside her easel criticising her work. No one, she told Oliver, had ever been so interested before with the little niceties of her technique, — in the amount of oil used, in the way the paints were mixed, in the value of a palette knife as a brush or of an old cotton rag as a blender; nor had any one of her sitters ever been so enthusiastic over her results.

There was one half-hour sketch which more than all the others astonished and delighted him —one in which Margaret in her finishing touches had eschewed brushes, palette knife, and rag, and with one dash of her dainty thumb had brought into instant relief the subtle curves about his finely modelled nose. This filled him with wonder and admiration. His own fingers had always obeyed him, and he loved to find the same skill in another.

To Richard these hours of intercourse with Margaret were among the happiest of his life. It was Margaret, indeed, who really helped him bear with patience the tedious delays attendant upon the completion of his financial operations. Even when the final sum was agreed upon — and it was a generous one, that filled Oliver's

heart with joy and set Nathan's imagination on fire — the best part of two weeks had been consumed before the firm of lawyers who were to pass upon Richard's patents were willing to certify to the purchasers of the stock of the Horn Magnetic Motor Company as to the priority of Richard's invention based on the patent granted on August 13, 1856, and which covered the principle of the levers working in connection with the magnets.

During these tedious delays, in which his heart had vibrated between hope and fear, he had found his way every afternoon to Margaret's studio, Nathan having gone home to Kennedy Square with his head in the clouds when the negotiations became a certainty. In these weeks of waiting the Northern girl had not only stolen his heart, taking the place of a daughter he had never known, — a void never filled in any man's soul, — but she had satisfied a craving no less intense, the hunger for the companionship of one who really understood his aims and purposes. Nathan had in a measure met this need as far as unselfish love and unswerving loyalty could go; and so had his dear wife, especially in these later years, when her mind had begun to grasp the meaning of the social and financial changes that the war had brought,

and what place her husband's inventions might hold in the new régime. But no one of these, not even Nathan, had ever understood him as clearly as had this young girl.

When it grew too dark to paint, he would make her sit on a stool at his feet, while he would talk to her of his life work and of the future as he saw it, — often of things which he had kept shut away in his heart even from Nathan. He would tell her of the long years of anxiety; of the sleepless nights; of his utter loneliness, without a friend to guide him, while he was trying to solve the problems that had blocked his path; of the poverty of these late years, all the more pitiful because of his inability at times to buy even the bare materials and instruments needed for his work; and, again, of his many disappointments in his search for the hoped-for link that was needed to make his motor a success.

Once, in lowered tones and with that eager, restless expression which so often came into his face when standing over his work bench in his little shop, baffled by some unsolved problem, he told her of his many anxieties lest some other brain groping along the same paths should reach the goal before him; how the "Scientific Review," the one chronicle of the discoveries of

the time, would often lie on his table for hours before he had the courage to open it and read the list of patents granted during the preceding months, adding, with a voice full of gentleness, "I was ashamed of it all, afterward, my dear, but Mrs. Horn became so anxious over our daily expenses, and so much depended on my success!"

This brave pioneer did not realize, nor did she, that they were both valiant soldiers fighting the good fight of science and art against tradition and provincialism, — part of that great army of progress which was steadily conquering the world!

As she listened in the darkening shadows, her hand in his, her fingers tight about his own, he, reading the sympathy of her touch, and fearing to have distressed her by his talk, had started up, and in his cheery, buoyant voice cried out, —

"But it is all over now, my child. All past and gone. The work of my life is finished. There 's plenty now for all of us. For my dear wife, who has borne up so bravely and has never complained, and for you and Oliver. Your waiting need not be long, my dear. This last happiness which has come to me," and he smoothed her hair gently with his thin hand and drew

her closer to him, "seems the greatest of them all."

The two were seated in this way one afternoon, Margaret resting after a day's work, when Oliver opened the door. She had made a sketch of Richard's head that very morning as he lay back in a big chair, a strong, vigorous piece of work which she afterward finished.

Richard looked up and his face broke into a joyous smile.

"Bring a chair, my son," he cried, "and sit by me. I have something to say to you." When, a few moments later, Margaret had left the room to give some directions to Mrs. Mulligan, he added, "I have been telling Margaret that you both do wrong in putting off your marriage. These delays fret young people's lives away. She tells me it is your wish. What are you waiting for?"

"Only for money enough to take care of her, father. Madge has been accustomed to more comforts than I can give her. She would, I know, cheerfully give up half of her income, small as it is, to me if I would let her, but that is not the way I want to make her happy. Don't worry, dear old Dad, the Fish portrait will pull us out," — and he leaned down and put his arms about

his father's neck as he used to do when he was a boy. "I shall get there before long."

Oliver did not tell his father what a grief it had been to him to keep Madge waiting, nor how he had tried to make it up to her in every way while he had made his fight alone. Nor did he tell Richard of the principal cause of his waiting, that the mortgage to which his mother had pledged her name and to which he had morally pledged his own was still unpaid.

Richard listened to Oliver's outburst without interrupting him.

"I only wanted to do the best I could for you, my son," he answered, laying his fingers on Oliver's hand. "I was thinking of nothing but your happiness. During the last few days, since I have become assured that this negotiation would go through, I have decided to carry out a plan which has long been in my mind and which, now that I know about Margaret, makes it all the more necessary. I am going to make provision for you immediately. This, I hope, will be tomorrow or the next day at farthest. The contracts are all ready for our signatures, and only await the return of one of the attorneys who is out of town. The cash sum they pay for the control of the patents is, as you know, a considerable one; then I get nearly half of the

capital stock of the new company. I am going to give you, at once, one third of the money and one third of the stock."

Oliver raised his hand in protest, but Richard kept on.

"It is but just, my son. There are but three of us, — your mother, yourself, and I. It is only your share. I won't have you and Margaret waiting until I am gone," and he looked up with a smile on his face.

Oliver stood for a moment dazed at the joyous news, his father's hand in his, the tears dimming his eyes. While he was thanking him, telling him how glad he was that the struggle was over, and how proud he was of his genius, Margaret stole up behind him and put her hands over his eyes, bidding him guess who it was, — as if there could be another woman in the whole world who would take the liberty. Oliver caught her in his arms and kissed her, whispering in her ears the joyous news with her cheek close to his; and Margaret looked from one to the other, and then put her arms around Richard and kissed him without a word, — the first time she had ever dared so much!

Oh, but there were joyous times that followed!

Mrs. Mulligan, at a whispered word from her

mistress, ran downstairs as fast as her old legs could carry her and came back with her arms full of bundles, which she dumped upon her small kitchen table. And Margaret put on a clean white apron, white as snow, and rolled up her sleeves, showing her beautiful arms above her elbows,—Oliver always vowed that she had picked them up where the Milo had dropped them, — and began emptying the contents of a bowl of oysters, one of Mrs. Mulligan's packages, into a chafing-dish. And Oliver wheeled out the table and brought out the cloth, and dear old Richard, his face full of smiles, placed the napkins with great precision beside each plate, puckering them up into little sheaves, "just as Malachi would have done," he said; and then Margaret whispered to Oliver if he did n't think "it would be just the very thing," they were "so anxious to see him," and Oliver thought it would, — he was cutting bread at the moment, and getting it ready for Mrs. Mulligan to toast on her cracker-box of a range; and Margaret, with her arms and her cheeks scarlet, ran out in the hall and down the corridor, and came back, out of breath, with two other girls, — one in a calico frock belted in at her slender waist, and the other in a black bombazine and a linen collar. And Richard looked into their faces,

and took them both by the hand and told them how glad he was to be permitted to share in their merrymakings; and then, when Oliver had drawn out the chairs, — one was a stool, by the way, — the whole party sat down, Oliver at the foot and Richard on Margaret's right, the old gentleman remarking, as he opened his napkin, that but one thing was wanting to complete his happiness, and that was Oliver's mother, who of all women in the world would enjoy the occasion the most.

But the happiest time of all was over the soup, or rather over the tureen, or rather what was inside of it — or worse still, what was not. This wonderful soup had been ordered at the restaurant across the way, and was to be brought in smoking hot at the appointed time by a boy. The boy arrived on the minute, and so did the tureen, a gayly flowered affair with a cover, the whole safely ensconced in a basket. When the lid was lifted and Margaret and the two girls looked in, a merry shout went up. Not a drop of soup was in the tureen! The boy craned his head in amazement, and Mrs. Mulligan, who stood by with the plates, and who had broken out into violent gestures at the sight, was about to upbraid the boy for his stupidity, when Margaret's quick eye discovered a trail of grease

running down the tablecloth, along the floor and out of the door. Whereupon everybody got up, including Richard, and with roars of laughter followed the devious trail out into the hall and so on down the staircase as far as they could see. Only when Mrs. Mulligan, on their return to the room, held up the tureen and pointed to a leak in its bottom, was the mystery explained.

And so the merry dinner went on.

Ah, dear old man, if these happy days could only have gone on till the end!

On the afternoon of the day following this joyous night — the day the contracts were to be signed, a culmination which would make everybody happy — Margaret hurried up the stairs of her building, and pushed open the door. She knew she should find the inventor waiting for her, and she wanted to be the first to get the glad news from his lips. It was varnishing day at the Academy, and she had gone down to put the last touches on her big portrait, — the one of "Madame X." that she had begun in Paris the year before.

Richard did not move when she entered. He was leaning back in the chair she had placed for him, his head on his hand, his attitude one of thoughtful repose, the light of the fast-fading twilight making a silhouette of his figure. She

thought he was dozing, and so crept up behind him to make sure.

"Ah, my dear, is that you?" he asked. The voice did not sound like Richard's.

"Yes — I thought you were asleep."

"No, my child, — I 'm only greatly troubled. I 'm glad you have come," and he took her hand and smoothed it with his own. "Bring your stool; I have something to say to you."

Without taking off her bonnet and cloak, she took her place at his feet. The tones of his voice chilled her. A great fear rose in her heart. Why she could not tell.

"Has anything happened to Oliver?" she asked eagerly.

"No, nothing so terrible as that. It is about the motor. The bankers have refused the loan, and the attorneys have withdrawn the papers."

"Withdrawn the papers! Oh, no, it can't be!" She had leaned forward now, her anxious, startled eyes looking into his.

"Yes, my dear; a Mr. Gorton from Maine has perfected a machine which not only accomplishes what I claim for my own, but is much better in every way. The attorneys have been looking into this new motor for a week past, so I learn now. Here is their letter," and he put his hand in his pocket and took out a white en-

velope. "They will perhaps take up Mr. Gorton's machine instead of mine. I made a hasty examination of this new motor this morning with my old friend Professor Morse, and we both agree that the invention is all Mr. Gorton claims for it. It is only a beginning, of course, along the lines of galvanic energy, but it is a better beginning than mine, and I feel sure it is all the inventor claims for it. I have so informed them, and I have also written a letter to Mr. Gorton congratulating him on his success." The calmness and gentleness of his voice thrilled her.

"I suppose I ought to have telegraphed the news to Mrs. Horn, as I promised," he continued slowly, as if each word gave him pain, "but I really had not the heart, so I came up here. I've been here all the afternoon hoping you would come in. The room felt a little cold, my dear, and your good woman made a fire for me, as you see. You don't mind, do you?"

Margaret bowed her head on his hands and kissed the thin fingers that lay in her own. Her heart was full to bursting. The pathos of the bent figure, the despairing sound of his voice, so unlike his buoyant tones, the ghostly light that permeated the room, so restful always before, so gruesome and forbidding now, appealed to her in a way she had never known. She was

not thinking of herself, nor of Oliver, nor of the wife waiting for the news at home; she was only thinking of this dear old man who sat with bowed head, his courage gone, all the joyousness out of his life. What hurt her most was her own utter helplessness. In most things she could be of service: now she was powerless. She knew it when she spoke.

"Is it ended?" she asked at last, her practical mind wanting to know the worst.

"Yes, my child, ended. I wish I could give you some hope, but there is none. I shall go home to-morrow and begin again — on what I do not know — something — I cannot tell."

Oliver's footsteps sounded in the outer hall. She rose quickly and met him on the outside, half closing the door, so that she could tell him the dreadful news without being overheard.

"Broken their promises to father! Impossible! Why? What for? Another invention? Oh, it cannot be!"

He walked quickly toward him. "But, father, what about your patents? They can't rob you of them. Suppose this man's motor is better!"

Richard did not move. He seemed unwilling to look his son in the face.

"Let me take hold of this thing." Oliver was

bending over him now, his arms about his neck. "I 'll see Mr. Slade at once. I met him this morning and told him you were here, and he is coming to call on you. He has always stood by me and will now. These people who have disappointed you are not the only ones who have got money. Mr. Slade, you know, is now a banker himself. I will begin to-morrow to fight this new man who "—

"No, no, my son, you must do nothing of the kind," said Richard, leaning his cheek wearily against Oliver's hand, as if for warmth and protection, but still looking into the fire. "It would not be right to take from him what he has honestly earned. The lifting power of his machine is four times my own, and the adjustment of the levers much simpler. He has only accomplished what I failed to do. I am not quite sure, but I think he uses the same arrangement of levers that I do, but everything else is his. Such a man is to be helped, not worried with lawsuits. No, my son, I must bear it as best I may. Your poor mother!" He stopped suddenly and passed his hand over his eyes, and in a broken, halting voice, added, "I 've tried so hard to make her old age happier. I fear for the result when the news reaches her. And you and this poor girl!"

— and he reached out his hand to Margaret — "this is the part that is hardest to bear."

Oliver disengaged his arm from his father's neck and walked up and down the room, Madge watching him. His mind was searching about for some way to stem the tide of disaster, every movement of his body expressing his determination. He was not thinking of himself. He saw only Madge and his mother. Then he turned again and faced his father.

"Will you let me try?" he urged in a firm voice.

"No, Oliver! Positively no."

As he spoke he straightened himself in his chair and turned toward Oliver. His voice had regained something of its old-time ring and force. "To rob a man of the work of his brain is worse than to take his purse. You will agree with me, I know, when you think it over. Mr. Gorton had never heard of my invention when he perfected his, nor had I ever heard of his when I perfected mine. He is taking nothing from me; how can I take anything from him? Give me your hand, my son; I am not feeling very well." His voice fell again, as if the effort had been too much for him. "I think I will go back to the hotel. A night's rest will do me good."

He rose slowly from his chair, steadied himself by holding to Oliver's strong arm, stood for an instant looking into Margaret's eyes, and said, with infinite tenderness,—

"Come closer, my daughter, and kiss me."

She put her arms about him, cuddling her head against his soft cheek, smoothing his gray hair with her palm.

"My child," he said, "you have been a delight and joy to me. A woman like you is beyond price. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for loving my son."

With something of his old manner he again straightened himself up, threw his shoulders back as if strengthened by some new determination, walked firmly across the room, and picked up his cloak. As he stood waiting for Oliver to place it about his shoulders, he put his hand to his side, with a quick movement, as if smitten by some sudden pain, staggered backward, his head upon his breast, and would have sunk to the floor but for Oliver's hand. Margaret sprang forward and caught his other arm.

"It's nothing, my son," he said, between his gasps for breath, holding on to Oliver. "A sudden giddiness. I 'm often subject to it. I perhaps got up too quickly. It will pass over. Let me sit down for a moment."

Half supporting him, Oliver put his arm about his father and laid him on the lounge.

As Richard's head touched the cushion that Margaret had made ready, he gave a quick gasp, half rose as if to breathe the better, and fell back unconscious.

When the doctor arrived Richard was lying on Margaret's bed, where Oliver had carried him. He had rallied a little, and had then sunk into a deep sleep. Margaret sat beside him, watching every breath he drew, the scalding tears streaming down her face.

The physician bent closer and pressed his ear to the sleeping man's breast.

"Has he been subject to these attacks?" he said in a grave tone.

"I know of only one some years ago, the year the war broke out, but he recovered then very quickly," answered Oliver.

"Is your mother living?"

"Yes."

"Better send her word at once."

XXV

SMOULDERING COALS

THE night wind sighed through the old sycamores of Kennedy Square. A soft haze, the harbinger of the coming spring, filled the air. The cold moon, hanging low, bleached the deserted steps of the silent houses to a ghostly white. In the Horn mansion a dim light burned in Richard's room, and another in the lower hall. Everywhere else the house was dark.

Across the Square, in Miss Clendenning's boudoir, a small wood fire, tempering the chill of the April night, slumbered in its bed of ashes, or awakened with fitful starts, its restless blaze illumining the troubled face of Margaret Grant. The girl's eyes were fixed on the dying coals, her chin in her hand, the brown-gold of her wonderful hair gold-red in the firelight. Now and then she would lift her head as if listening for some approaching footstep. Miss Clendenning sat beside her, leaning over the hearth in her favorite attitude, her tiny feet resting on the fender.

The years had touched the little lady but lightly since that night when she sat in this same spot and Oliver had poured out his heart to her. She was the same dainty, precise, lovable old maid that she had been in the old days of Kennedy Square, when the crocuses bloomed in the flower-beds and its drawing-rooms were filled with the wit and fashion of the day. Since that fatal night when Richard had laid away his violin and brother had been divided against brother, and Kennedy Square had become the stamping-ground of armed men, she had watched by the bedsides of a thousand wounded soldiers, regardless of which flag they had battled under. The service had not withered her. Time had simply stood still, forgetting the sum of its years, while it marked her with perennial sweetness.

"I'm afraid he's worse," Margaret said, breaking the silence of the room, as she turned to Miss Clendenning, "or Ollie would have been here before this. Dr. Wallace was to go to the house at eleven, and now it is nearly twelve."

"The doctor may have been detained," Miss Clendenning answered. "There is much sickness in town."

For a time neither spoke. Only the low

muttering of the fire could be heard, or the turning of some restless coal.

"Margaret," Miss Clendenning said at last, — it had always been "Margaret" with the little lady ever since the day she had promised Oliver to love the woman whom he loved; and it was still "Margaret" when the women met for the first time in the gray dawn at the station, and Miss Clendenning herself helped lead Richard out of the train, — "there is a bright side to every trouble. But for this illness you would never have known Oliver's mother as she really is. All her prejudices melted away as soon as she looked into your face. She loves you better every day, and she is learning to depend on you, just as Richard and Oliver have done."

"I hope she will," the young woman answered, without moving. "It breaks my heart to see her suffer as she does. I see my own mother in her so often. She is different in many ways, but she is the same underneath — so gentle and so kind, and she is so big and broad-minded, too. I am ashamed to think of all the bitter feelings I used to have in my heart toward her."

She stopped abruptly, her hands tightly folded in her lap, her shoulders straightened. Margaret's confessions were always made in this de-

termined way, — head thrown back like a soldier's, as though a new resolve had been born even while an old sin was being confessed.

"Go on," said Miss Clendenning. "I understand. You mean that you did not know her."

"No; but I thought her narrow and proud, and that she disliked me for influencing Oliver in his art, and that she wanted to keep him from me and from my ideals. Oh, I've been very, very wicked!"

"Not wicked, my dear — only human. You are not the first woman who did not want to divide a love with a mother."

"But it was n't exactly that, dear Cousin Lavinia. I had never met any one who obeyed his mother as Ollie did, and — and — I almost hated her for being his guide and counsel when — oh, not because she did not love him too, just as I did — but because I thought that I could really help him most — because I believed in his talent and she did not, and because I knew all the time that she was ruining him, keeping him back, spoiling his career, and" —

Again she stopped and straightened herself, her beautiful head held higher. Those who knew Margaret well would have known that the worst part of her confession was yet to come.

"I suppose I was hurt, too," she said, slowly accentuating each pause with a slight movement of the head. "That I was *little* enough and *mean* enough and *horrid* enough for that. But he was always talking of his mother as though she never did anything but sit still in that white shawl of hers, listening to music, while everybody waited on her and came to her for advice. And I always thought that she could n't understand me nor any other woman who wanted to work. When Ollie talked of you all, and of what you did at home, I could n't help feeling she must think that I and all my people belonged to some different race, and that when she saw me she would judge me by some petty thing that displeased her, — the cut of my skirt, or the way I carried my hands, or something else equally trivial, — and that she would use that kind of thing against me, and perhaps tell Ollie, too. Father judged Oliver in that way. He thought that Ollie's joyousness and his courtesy, even his way of taking off his hat, and holding it in his two hands for a moment, — you 've seen him do it a hundred times, — was only a proof of his Southern shiftlessness, — caring more for manners than for work. Mother did n't; she understood Ollie better, and so did John, but father never could. That 's why

I would n't come when you asked me. You would n't have judged me, I know, but I thought that she would. And now — oh, I 'm so sorry I could cry."

"It was only another of the mistakes and misunderstandings that divided us all at that time, my dear," Miss Clendenning answered. "This dreadful war could have been averted, if people had only come together, and understood each other. I did not think so then, but I do now."

"And you don't think me wicked, Cousin Lavinia?" Margaret asked with a sudden relaxation of her figure and something infinitely childlike and appealing in her tone. "You really don't think me wicked, do you?"

"Not wicked, dear; only human, as I said a moment ago. Yet you have been stronger than I. You have held on and won; I let go and lost."

Margaret bent forward and laid her finger on Miss Clendenning's knee.

"Lost what, Cousin Lavinia?" she asked in surprise.

"My lover."

"When?"

"When I was just your age."

"Did he die?" asked Margaret in awed tones, overcome all at once with the solemnity of

the hour and a strange new note in Miss Lavinia's voice.

"No, he married some one else."

"He never — never loved you, then." There was a positiveness now in her intonations.

"Yes, he did, with all his heart. His mother came between us."

Again silence fell on the room. Margaret would not look at Miss Clendenning. The little old maid had suddenly opened the windows of her heart, but whether to let a long-caged sorrow out or some friendly sympathy in, she could not tell.

"May I know about it?" There was a softer cadence now in the girl's voice.

"It would only make you unhappy, dear. It was all over forty years or more ago. Sallie, when she saw you, put her arms about you. You had only to come together. The oftener she sees you, the more she will love you. My lover's mother shut the door in my face."

"In your face? Why?"

Margaret moved closer to Miss Clendenning, stirred by a sudden impulse, as if she could even now protect her from one who had hurt her.

Miss Lavinia bent forward and picked up the brass tongs that lay on the fender at her feet.

She saw Margaret's gesture, but she did not turn her head. Her eyes were still watching the smouldering embers.

"For no reason, dear, that you or any other Northern woman could understand. An old family quarrel that began before I was born."

Margaret's cheeks flushed and a determined look came into her face.

"The coward! I would not have cared what his mother or anybody else did, or how they quarrelled. If I loved you I would have married you in spite of everything."

"And so would he." She was balancing the tongs in her hand now, her eyes still on the fire. She had not looked at Margaret once.

"What happened, then?"

Miss Clendenning leaned forward, spread the tongs in her little hands, lifted an ember and tucked it closer to its neighbor. The charred mass crumbled at the touch and fell into a heap of broken coals.

"I am a Clendenning, my dear; that is all," she answered slowly.

Margaret stared at her with wide-open eyes. That a life should be wrecked for a mere question of family pride was something her mind could not fathom.

"Have you regretted it since, Cousin Lavinia?" she asked calmly. She wanted to follow it out now to the end.

Miss Clendenning heaped the broken coals closer together, laid the tongs back in their place on the fender, and, turning to Margaret, said, with a sigh, —

"Don't ask me, my dear. I never dare ask myself, but do you keep your hand close in Oliver's. Remember, dear, close — close! Then you will never know the bitterness of a lonely life."

She rose from her seat, bent down, and, taking Margaret's cheeks between her palms, kissed her on the forehead.

Margaret put her arms about the little lady, and was about to draw her nearer, when the front door opened and a step was heard in the hall. Miss Lavinia raised herself erect, listening to the sound.

"Hark!" she cried, "there 's the dear fellow now," and she advanced to meet him, her gentle countenance once more serene.

Oliver's face as he entered the room told the story.

"Not worse?" Margaret exclaimed, starting from her chair.

"Yes — much worse. I have just sent word

to Uncle Nat," and he kissed them both. "Put on your things at once. The doctor is anxious."

Miss Lavinia caught up her cloak, handed Margaret her shawl, and the three hurried out the front door and along the Square, passing the Pancoast house, now turned into offices, its doors and windows covered with signs, and the Clayton mansion, surmounted by a flagpole and still used by the government. Entering the park, they crossed the site of the once lovely flowerbeds, now trampled flat, — as was everything else in the grounds, — and so on to the marble steps of the Horn mansion.

Mrs. Horn met them at the top of the stairs. She put her arms silently about Margaret, kissed her tenderly, and led her into Richard's room. Oliver and Miss Clendenning stood at the door.

The master lay under the canopy of the four-post bedstead, his eyes closed, the soft white hair lost in the pillows, the pale face tinged with the glow of the night lamp. Dr. Wallace was standing by the bed watching the labored breathing of the prostrate man. Old Hannah sat on the floor at Richard's feet. She was rocking to and fro, making no sign, crooning inaudibly to herself, listening to every sound.

Margaret sank to her knees and laid her cheek on the coverlet. She wanted to touch something that was close to him.

The head of the sick man turned uneasily. The doctor bent noiselessly down, put his ears close to the patient's breast, touched his pulse with his fingers, and laid his hand on his forehead.

"Better send for some hot water," he whispered to Mrs. Horn when he had regained her side. Margaret overheard, and started to rise from her knees, but Mrs. Horn waved her back. "Hannah will get it," she said, and stooped close to the old woman to give the order. There was a restrained calmness in her manner that sent a shiver through Margaret. She remembered just such an expression on her mother's face when her own father lay dying.

The old servant lifted herself slowly, and with bent head and crouching body crept out of the room without turning her face toward her master. The superstition of the negroes about the eyes of a dying man kept hers close to the floor, — she did not want Richard to look at her.

Dr. Wallace detected the movement — he knew its cause — and passed out of the sick chamber to where Oliver stood with Miss Clendenning.

"Better go down, Oliver, and see that the hot water is sent up right away," he said. "Poor old Hannah seems to have lost her head."

"Has there been any further change, doctor?" Oliver asked, as he started for the stairs.

"No, not since you went. He is holding his own. His hands feel cold, that is all." To Miss Lavinia he said, "It is only a question of hours," and went back into the room.

Oliver hurried after Hannah. He intended to send Malachi up with the hot water and then persuade the old woman to go to bed. When he reached the lower hall it was empty; so were the parlors and the dining-room. At the kitchen door he met Hannah. She had filled the pitcher and had turned to carry it upstairs. Oliver stopped her.

"Where is Malachi, aunty?"

Hannah pointed through the open door to Richard's little shop in the back yard and hurried on. Oliver walked quickly through the damp, brick-paved yard, now filled with the sombre shadows of the night, and pushed open the green door. The place was dark except for a slant of moonlight which had struggled through the window pane and was illumining the motor

where it rested in its customary place under the sash.

"Malachi, are you here?"

A sob was the only answer.

Oliver stepped inside. The old man was on his knees, his head and arms lying flat on Richard's work bench. Oliver bent down and laid his hand on the old servant's head.

"Mally!"

"I hear ye, Marse Ollie, an' I hearn Hannah. I tell you same as I tol' her, — ain't no use fetchin' no water; ain't no use no mo' for no doctor, ain't no use, ain't no use. I ain't never goin' to say no mo' to him, 'Char 's all ready, Marse Richard.' I ain't never goin' to wait on him no mo'. Come close to me, Marse Ollie; get down an' let me tell ye, son."

He had lifted his head now, and was looking up into Oliver's eyes, the tears streaming down his face.

"He freed me; he gimme a home. He ain't neber done nothin' but love me an' take care o' me. When I bin sick he come in an' he set by me. 'You got a fever, I think, Malachi,' he say. 'Go to bed dis minute. Cold, is you? Git dat blanket out'n my room an' put it on yo' bed. Don't let me hab to tell ye dat ag'in, Malachi.' 'Marse Richard,' I 'd say to him, 'I

ain't got no coat fit to wear.' Dat was in de ole days, when you warn't nuffin but a chile, Marse Ollie. 'Who says so, Malachi?' he say. 'I say so, Marse Richard.' 'Lemme see,' he 'd say. 'Dat 's so, dat ain't fit fer nobody to wear. Go upstairs to my closet, Malachi, an' git dat coat I was a-wearin' yisterday. I reckon I kin git on widout it."

Malachi had his head in his hands now, his body swaying from side to side. Oliver stood silent.

"When he come home de udder day an' I lif' him in de bed, he say, 'Don't you strain yo'se'f, Malachi. 'Member, you ain't spry as you was.' Oh, Gawd! Oh, Gawd! What 's Malachi gwine to do?"

Oliver sat down beside him. There was nothing to say. The old servant's grief was only his own.

"Ebery night, Marse Ollie, sence he bin sick, I git so lonesome dat I wait till de house git still an' den I git out'n de bed and crope downstairs an' listen at de bedroom door. Den I hear de mistis say: 'In pain, dear?' and he say, 'No, Sallie.' An' den I crope up ag'in an' go to bed kind o' comforted. I was down ag'in las' night — mos' mawnin' — a-listenin', an' de mistis say: 'Kin I do sumpin to ease de pain,

dear ? ' an' he don't answer, only groan, and den I hear de bed creak, an' dat *short bref come*. Dat 's the sign ! I knows it. In de mawnin' he 'll be gone. Can't fool Malachi ; I knows de signs."

A gentle tap at the front door on the street sounded through the stillness. Oliver had left all the intervening doors between the dining-room and the shop open in his search for Malachi.

The old servant, with the lifelong habit upon him, started up to answer the summons.

"No, Mally, stay here," said Oliver. "I 'll go. Some neighbor, perhaps, wanting to know how father is."

Oliver walked rapidly through the yard, tip-toed through the hall, and carefully turned the knob.

Amos Cobb stepped in.

"I saw the light, Oliver," he said in a low tone, "and I knew you were up. I have an important telegram from New York in answer to one I sent this morning from my office here. Would it be possible for me to see your father ? I know it is very late, but the matter is most urgent."

"I 'm afraid not, Mr. Cobb. He is very low."

"Not serious ? " Amos exclaimed, in alarm.

"Dr. Wallace thinks it is."

"You don't tell me so! I had no idea he was so ill!"

"Nor did we, sir; a change for the worse set in this evening."

Amos leaned back against the wall, his hat in his hand. The light from the eight-sided hall lamp fell on his thick-set shoulders and square, determined, honest face. The keen-eyed, blunt Vermonter's distress at the news was sincere and heartfelt.

"Could I attend to it, Mr. Cobb?" asked Oliver.

"Perhaps so. I've got those fellows now where the hair is short, and I'm going to make 'em pay for it."

"What is it about?"

Amos Cobb took a double telegram from his pocket. It was closely written and contained a long message.

"It's about your father's patents. This telegram is from the attorneys of the Gorton" —

Oliver laid his fingers on the open telegram in Cobb's hand, and said in a positive tone, —

"He will not rob this man of his rights, Mr. Cobb."

"It's not that! It is the other way. The attorneys of the Gorton Company refuse to rob

your father of *his* rights. Further, the bankers will not indorse the Gorton stock until your father's patent — I think it is No. 18,131," and he examined the telegram closely — "yes, August 13, 1856, 18,131 — is out of the way. They are prepared to pay a large price for it at once, and have asked me to see your father and arrange it on the best terms I can. The offer is most liberal. I don't feel like risking an hour's delay ; that 's why I 'm here so late. What had I better do ? "

Oliver caught Mr. Cobb's hand in his, and a flash of exultant joy passed over his face as he thought of his father's triumph and all it meant to him. Then Margaret's eyes looked into his, and next his mother's ; he knew what it meant to them all. Then the wasted figure of his father rose in his mind, and his tears blinded him.

Amos stood watching him, trying to read his thoughts. He saw the tears glistening on Oliver's lashes, but he misunderstood the cause. Only the practical side of the situation appealed to the Vermonter at the moment. These New York men had cast discredit on his indorsement of Richard's priority in the invention and had tried to ignore them both. Now he held them tight in his grasp. Horn was a rich man.

"I 'll be very quiet, Oliver," he continued,

in a half pleading tone, "and will make it as short as I can. Just let me go up. It can't hurt him," and he laid his hand on Oliver's shoulder with a tenderness that surprised him. "I would never forgive myself if he should pass away without learning of his success. He 's worked so hard!"

Before Oliver could reply another low tap was heard at the door. Cobb turned the knob gently and Nathan stepped inside the hall. The old man had gone home and to bed, tired out with his ceaseless watching by Richard's bedside, and was only half dressed.

"Still with us?" he asked in trembling tones, his eyes searching Oliver's face. "Oh, thank God! Thank God! I'll go up at once," and he passed on toward the stairway. Amos and Oliver followed.

As Nathan's foot touched the first step Dr. Wallace's voice sounded over the banisters.

"Oliver! Malachi! Both of you — quick!"

The three bounded noiselessly upstairs and entered the room. Richard lay high up on the pillows, the face in shadow, his eyes closed. Margaret was still on her knees, her head on the coverlet. Mrs. Horn stood on the other side of the bed, the same calm, fixed expression on her face, as if she was trying to read the unknow-

able. Dr. Wallace sat on a chair beside his patient, his fingers on Richard's pulse.

"Is he gone?" asked Oliver, stepping quickly to his father's side, his voice choking.

Dr. Wallace shook his head.

Amos Cobb drew near, and whispered in the doctor's ear. The old physician listened quietly, and nodded in assent. Then he leaned over his patient.

"Mr. Cobb has some good news for you, Richard," he said calmly. "The bankers have recognized your patents, and are ready to pay the money" —

The dying man's eyes opened slowly.

Amos stepped in front of the doctor, and bent down close to the bed.

"It 's all right, Horn — all right! They can't get along without your first patent. Here 's the telegram." He spoke with an encouraging cheeriness in his voice, as one would in helping a child across a dangerous place.

The brow of the dying man suddenly cleared; the eyes burned with their old steadiness, then the lips parted.

"Read it," he muttered. The words were barely audible.

Cobb held the paper so the dim light should

fall upon it and read the contents slowly, emphasizing each word.

"Raise me up."

The voice seemed to come from his throat, as if his lungs were closed. Oliver started forward, but Cobb, being nearer, slipped his arm under the wasted figure, and with the tenderness of a woman lifted him carefully, tucking the pillows in behind the thin shoulders for better support. Oliver sank softly to his knees beside Margaret.

Again the thin lips parted.

"Read it once more." The voice came stronger now.

Amos held the paper to the light, and the words of the telegram, like the low tick of a clock, again sounded through the hushed room.

For a brief instant the inventor's eyes sought each face in turn. As his gaze rested on Margaret and Oliver, he moved his thin white hand slowly along the coverlet, and laid it first on Oliver's and next on Margaret's head. Then, with a triumphant look lighting his face, he lifted his arms toward his wife.

"Sallie!" he called, and fell back on his pillow, lifeless.

XXVI

THE LIGHT OF A NEW DAY

THE crocuses are a-bloom once more. The lilac buds are bursting with the joy of the new spring. A veil of silver gray floats over Moose Hillock. The idle brook, like a truant boy, dances in the sunshine, singing to itself as it leaps from ledge to pool.

All the doors and windows of the big studio on the side looking down the valley are open to the morning air. Through one of these Margaret has just entered, her arms full of apple blossoms. One spray she places in a slender blue jar, the delicate blush of the buds and the pale green of the leaves harmonizing with the gold-brown of her marvellous hair as she buries her face among them. All about the spacious room are big easels, half-finished portraits, rich draperies, wide divans, old brass, and rare porcelain.

In an easy-chair, close to the window, with

the fragrance of the blossoms around her, sits a white-haired old lady with a gossamer shawl about her shoulders. She is watching Margaret as she moves about the room, her eyes brimming with tenderness and pride. Now and then she looks toward a door leading into the bedroom beyond, as if expecting some one.

Oliver stands before his easel, his palette and brushes in his hand. He is studying the effect of a pat of color he has just laid on the portrait of a young girl in a rich gown, the fourth full-length he has painted this year, — the most important being the one of his father ordered by the Historical Society of Kennedy Square, and painted from Margaret's sketches.

Malachi — the old man is very feeble — moves slowly around a square table covered with a snow-white cloth, with seats set for four — one a high chair with little arms. In his hands are a heap of cups and saucers — the same Spode cups and saucers he looked after so carefully in the old house at home. These he places near the smoking coffee-urn.

Suddenly a merry, roguish laugh is heard, and a little fellow with gold-brown hair and big blue eyes peers in through the slowly opening door.

The old servant stops, and his withered face breaks into a smile.

"Is dat you, honey?" he cries, with a laugh. "Come along, son. Yo' char 's all ready, Marse Richard."

THE END

The Riverside Press
Electrotyped and printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.
Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.

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